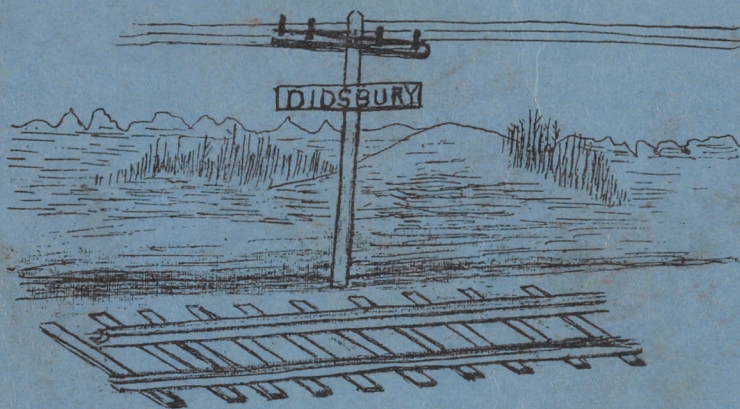


SUCH WAS LIFE



DIDSBURY IN 1893

Everything had to be done first and nothing to do it with.

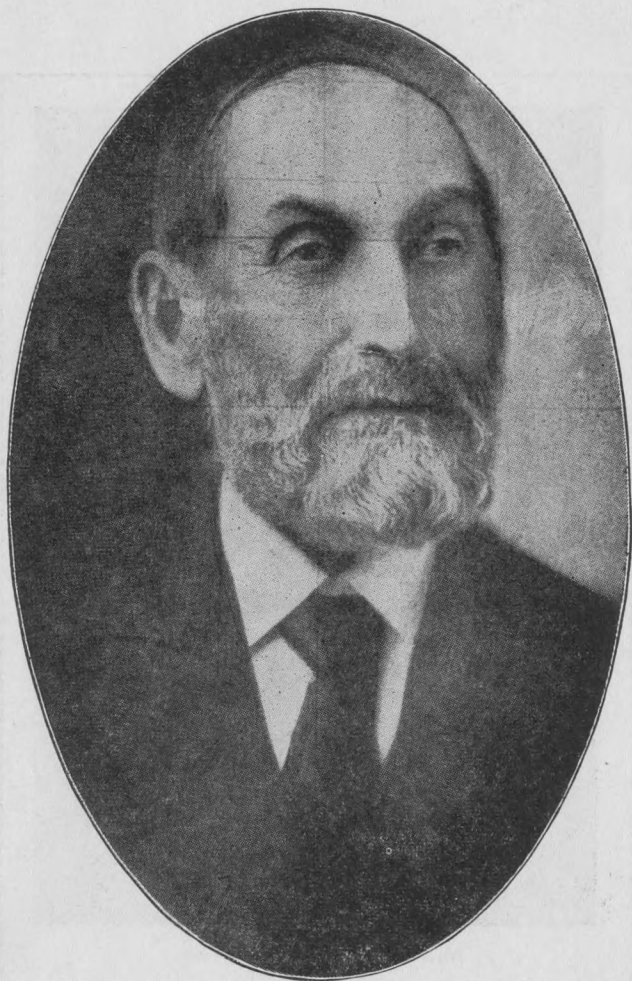
By M. WEBER

Such Was Life



M. WEBER—His 84th Year

By M. WEBER



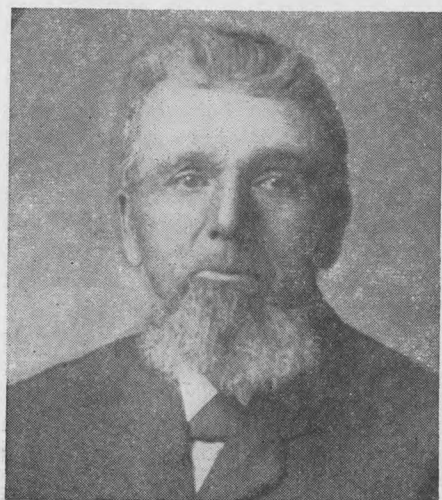
JACOB Y. SHANTZ—85 Years
Grandfather of the author and founder of Didsbury



JACOB SHANTZ

MARIA (YOST) SHANTZ

Came to Ontario in 1810. Great grandparents of the author.



ANDREW WEBER (1838-1909)

MRS. ANDREW WEBER (1846-1928)

Parents of the author

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

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Preface

In 1810 Jacob Shantz came to Waterloo County, out from the state of Pennsylvania and settled in the vicinity of what is now Kitchener. After getting married to Maria Yost, he started clearing a small acreage and built a sawmill on his farm and sawed timber for the surrounding settlers. He pioneered till 1856 when his son Jacob Y. took over farm and sawmill.

Jacob Y. Shantz followed his father's footsteps in clearing forests and improving farm lands and building homes and engaged in industrial pursuits.

From 1872 to 1879 he with other members of the Mennonite faith, took additional responsibilities in sponsoring a movement of about 36,000 European Mennonites to Canadian and American soil, of whom 8,250 souls came to southern Manitoba; these of course, came under the leadership of J. Y. Shantz and the Sir Jno. A. Macdonald Government who recognized him as a competent sponsor of the movement. He made 27 trips to the west in the interest of these immigrants as he was held responsible for government loans to the extent of \$96,000 with interest at six percent. In his 85th year he paid the final payment. Yet he had never charged for any of his time. The government however, saw fit to award a cheque of \$4,000 for his 30 years of faithful service. Many times he drew on his own bank for supplies until money was made available; at one time it amounted to \$60,000 tiding over an emergency. The founder of Didsbury in the depression of the early nineties, Mr. Shantz again scouted with a view to settlement and decided the district of Didsbury would be practical for mixed farming. He negotiated with the government in 1893 and a deal was made. He was to receive a $\frac{1}{4}$ section of land near the supposed townsite of the C.P.R. if he would build a shelter 20x100 ft. one storey and dig a well and build a barn for some stock. This he did before he went east. After sub-dividing his land into smaller parcels, he donated several acres to Didsbury to be, for a cemetery. The following spring he sponsored a carload of settlers who arrived on April 18th; among whom were his own son and two daughters with their families.

Breaking prairie sod or battling with a stump farm was the question of his son-in-law, Andrew Weber, who for over twenty years pulled stumps and dragged them periodically into fences.

With four sons coming up, each eligible for 160 acres was an opportunity that made an appeal; though he knew they had to pioneer for a decade. However, results could not help but be better than his twenty year battle with a stump farm.

Pioneering for sixty years and as fourth generation of pioneers, I could not help but establish a complex of ancestral characteristics. In that capacity I write and re-live, in part, the great drama of life. It's early adventure, its humor, its reverses, incidental and near fatal, its

privations, through fire, hail and frost and blizzards. Later came the hungry thirties with elevators full of grain, stock in abundance, yet no circulation of cash—a desperate man made depression long to be remembered, because it took years to catch up to that “prosperity around the corner” slogan. For it too (prosperity) kept going around the corner.

In writing the narrative of Didsbury and district under the title, “Such Was Life”, I fully realize that over this great and expansive West, thousands of similar experiences took place, some, no doubt, even more drastic than those cited, yet all so true.

Not having kept a diary, I have to write and sketch from memory, assisted by others who likewise had the branding irons of experience indelibly pressed into the fabric of life. It is written in pioneer language.

In contrast to our streamlined, push-buttoned greater now, it might be well for our juniors to learn the back-ground on which this gliding present is based; that it did not come by chance over night.

The Maclean's account of Bruce Hutchinson's re-discovery of the Provinces, was as interesting as it was timely. So also the overall Canadian pictures shown and described by John Fisher, are educative and inspiring. Both portray the potentialities of an ever greater and more beautiful Canada. However a real taste of the sting of early pioneering in its many phases of development, is equally essential in helping to know Canada better and is giving a greater comparative knowledge of re-discovery.

When pioneer nerve has to play capital, as well as brains in meeting the existing situation for a full decade or more. When everything has to be done first and so little to do it with, when repeated ravages by fire, hail, frost, blizzards, floods, sickness and death through undue exposure, accidents, incidental and near fatal, privations and what have you? All in their turn exacting their toll with interest; that takes a big fortitude, a big nerve, a big faith to combat the over-powering forces that pioneers were victims of. Hope failed to be hope—Visualizing seemed to be a mockery, patience no longer existed. No telescopic view to indicate what the distant future could bestow.

To have known our province (mine is Alberta) in its pioneer state by being a part of it, and now see it, in its nineteen fifty-six garb with all its frills, is indeed marvelous. Nor is this re-discovery the ultimate; a further half a century's progress, with its increased momentum, will be an ever greater revelation of things to come.

Doctors, too, came in for their quota of headaches and hardships in pioneer days. Here is an example:

Dr. Weart received a call from Sunnyslope (school district ten miles southwest of Didsbury). In the doctor's mind there was only a Sunnyslope twenty-six miles east of here, and in the patient's mind there was only the Sunnyslope southwest of Didsbury. With horses and buggy the doctor made the twenty-six-mile trip, but found no patient by the name indicated.

In the meantime the patient kept calling on the phone, when might she expect the doctor? Mrs. Weart, who answered the phone, began to grow hysterical, knowing the doctor should have arrived before then. Thinking something might have happened the doctor, she wore the long hours away during the night sleeplessly. By the next morning the doctor had returned home after a fifty-two mile futile trip. He was informed of the situation and had to start on another 20-mile trip, after his breakfast, and a leg-weary team of horses and extended suffering by the patient and Mrs. Weart. There were no mileage subsidies in those days, paid by the Government.

No doubt many incidents could be cited, similar to the above, that would make a story in themselves. Who would not want to be a country pioneer doctor? Who would not want to be a pioneer?

Mr. and Mrs. Vance and their two children were the first to land at Didsbury. Mrs. Vance was the first woman in the country. How lonely it must have been for her and the children. When Mr. Vance had no auger to bore holes through the door, he used a gun. Such were his means at hand and quite often he would use such tactics.

Tom Vance, Levi Stechley and Elias Shantz were the first to break sod on the prairie.

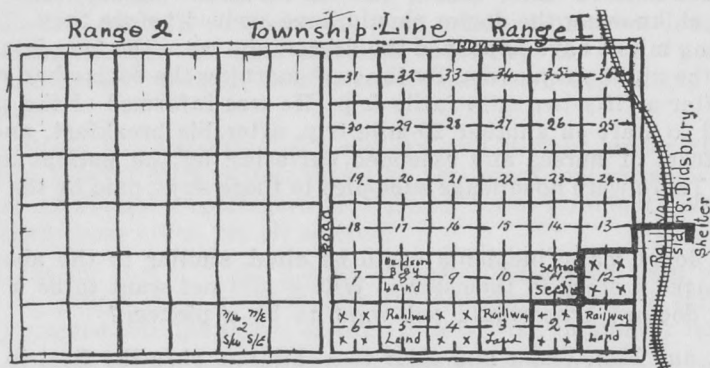
Sam Troyer came next in March of 1894. William Huntsperger and his two sons, Allan and Abner, came from Michigan. The remainder of the 36 came from around Berlin (Kitchener), Ontario.

Jacob Y. Shantz received a quarter section of land for building a shelter 20x100 feet, a stable and for digging a well. He gave several acres free for a cemetery.

The first boy born in the country in 1894 was Jacob Y. Shantz Jr., named after his great-grandfather, Jacob Y. Shantz. The first boy born in the town of Didsbury in 1901 was Arnold Lisemer.

Calgary, Alberta

M. WEBER



TOWNSHIP LINE AND ROAD ALLOWANCE

Four quarters to a section of 640 acres. Thirty-six sections to a township. Six miles square. Townships run east to west in number. Range runs north and south. Iron stake with numbers at each corner of section. We found our section by tying a ribbon on the spoke of a wheel and measuring the circumference of the wagon wheel in feet and dividing it into the number of feet in a mile. Also the same rule applied for half a mile. The stakes often were hidden in grass or small brush. We had no compass, took searching to find the stake.



A Sunday scene in Didsbury in 1895—Church, kitchen, post office in one end of the Immigration Shed, 20x100ft., built 1893 by J. Y. Shantz, founder of Didsbury.

Such Was Life

We count more than a hundred years,
Our Ancestors were pioneers,
They chose to be on British soil,
From war be free, to serve and toil.

During revolutionary war, (1776)
American Folk from Britain tore,
This might destroy our covenant,
Which we had made with English gent.

O'er mountains steep they climbed with team,
And swam Niagara's threatening stream,
Through swamp they built a cordaroy,
For weeks they fought with death's employ.

On heavy timbered soil they'd land,
And cut some forest down by hand,
So they could sow a little corn,
Among the stumps which they had torn.

Facing Indians, wolves and frost,
In their new homes, no time was lost,
To clear and build a welfare state,
Where freedom's laws will compensate.

Full ninety years are in the past,
With change of scenery coming fast,
The price of good land soaring high,
That sons and daughters could not buy.

Within our blood the pioneer urge,
Began to rise, then to submerge
With wave to venture and explore
What newer fields would have in store.

United Empire Loyalist,
No longer would enslaved exist.
Off to the West we went to stay,
And strive and work the pioneer way.

Crowds of friends at the station met,
To bid farewell—with fear beset,
For welfare of the pioneers,
Who'll ne'er be seen throughout the years.

The first night we were on the train,
The slush was deep from snow and rain,
A horse broke loose in settler's car,
Cows and pigs he began to mar.

SUCH WAS LIFE

The car was to a platform placed,
And all hands to the spot then raced,
To re-load car we were compelled,
To guard the stock that each one held.

Just then an engine whistled by,
And in confusion we did fly,
From platform to a slushy bed,
Were soaking wet from foot to head.

Aside from bruises we received,
No one was hurt—were quite relieved,
Re-loaded stock into the car,
And off we were for fields afar.

For days the train crawled into space,
The antelope sometimes would chase,
When looking west strange clouds appeared,
From land's horizon they were reared.

They had high peaks and snowy caps,
Could they be Rockies? Well perhaps.
Though hundred forty miles away,
The scene was clear—a thrill, I'll say.

Eight days of jiggling o'er the rails,
And eating lunch from box and pails,
'Twas April eighteenth ninety four,
We landed here, more than a score.

'Twas in the night at three o'clock,
A slat seat car pulled into dock,
The brakeman gave a rousing call,
By shouting "Didsbury" that was all.

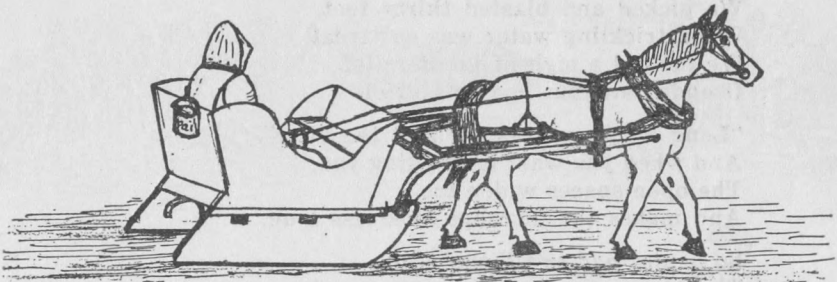
When daybreak came we looked about,
To see what kind of place was out,
But find a place?—Well bless your soul,
Didsbury hung on an upright pole.

A shed was built not far away,
Here settlers were allowed to stay,
Till homestead land they first would find,
And build a shelter of some kind.

We left some lumber and a tent,
Then to headquarters back we went,
Then Monday morning we had willed,
In all good faith a shack to build.

When all was quiet Sunday morn,
A day of rest we hoped was born,
But soon aroused from slumber's treat,
With prairie fire, smoke and heat.

SUCH WAS LIFE



The first insurance agent from Cochrane going overland to Didsbury on the Morley trail—out for business, in 1895. The Morley trail joined the Edmonton trail north of Olds. He slept in his sleigh when overtaken by night. Turned it upside down, and tied the horse to it.

We hitched the horses to the plow,
And battled hard with sweat of brow,
And fired back 'midst heat and smoke,
Until we felt we had to choke.

We saved the buildings in the block,
And little pasture for the stock,
The tent and lumber we had left,
It too was lost in burning theft.

For several days the dust storms blew,
The sun at times was hid from view,
One night there came a fall of snow,
And laid the dust and ashes low.

When snow was gone green grass appeared,
Peavine and Crocus soon they reared,
With color they new hope would bring,
The meadow lark and snipe would sing.

Hauling water from nearest creek,
Killed hours of time three times a week,
With pick and shovel and res'lute will,
We had to dig, there was no drill.

A windlas rope and bucket new,
Was part of our equipment too,
When down about to fourteen feet,
An accident was ours to meet.

The bucket with its load of dirt,
Dropped back on me, my head was hurt,
It knocked me out, the blood had stained,
Full half my shirt ere I regained.

Nor did misfortune end at that,
We next hit rock—It knocked us flat,
Near thirty miles we walked until,
We found some dynamite and drill,

SUCH WAS LIFE

We picked and blasted thirty feet,
When trickling water was our treat,
We heaved a sigh of great relief,
It ended all that gnawing grief.

"Long distance does enchant the view",
And when you walk it's fooling you,
The open spaces widen too,
And makes the distance look less true,

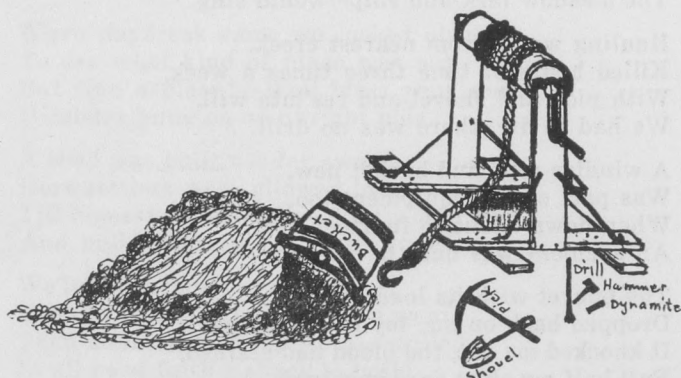
So ponies had to fill the need,
They'd jog along at moderate speed,
Ten dollars was the price I paid,
They'd feed on grass where e'er you stayed.

But now to break them for to ride,
That was a job I never tried,
It bucked and ran off down the trail,
As fast as ever it could sail.

It stepped into a badger hole,
And turned head over like a scroll,
It threw me off upon my head,
And for awhile I lay like dead.

My horse no longer lived to ride,
As he lay dead there by my side,
And tho' of horse I was bereft.
I thanked my God that I was left.

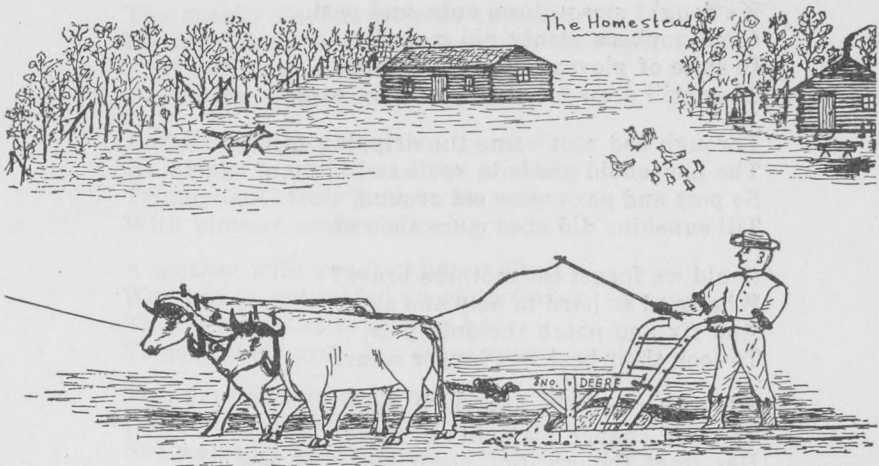
And as the seasons came and went,
Each moment had to be well spent,
Digging, building, and cutting hay,
While breaking sod was no child's play.



WELL WITH BUCKET AND ROPE

Digging a well in 1894, with pick and shovel, winding the ground to the surface with a windlass. One man in the well, one operating the windlass. When rock was struck at 14 ft. we had to drill by hand and blast with dynamite, then pick the walls into circular shape. Struck water at 46 ft. Four weeks hard work.

SUCH WAS LIFE



Breaking prairie sod in 1895, M. Weber—A whip and “get-up, gee and haw” were both ox-language and ox-law.

Go fourteen miles to get dry wood,
To keep the cook in cheerful mood,
And walk a mile to railway track,
And pound a plow-share then walk back.

Drive fifty miles to get supplies,
A three day trip you would despise,
The long long stretch of winding trail,
And sometimes caught in howling gale.

We met a family from the north,
With banner painted telling forth,
“We’ve had enough Alberta dust,
We’ll hit for Kansas or we’ll bust”.

One day a rancher on the trail,
Passed by and told his woeful tale,
How Indians settler’s cattle stole,
When o’er the prairie nights they stroll.

With ox team turned the furrow o’er,
Today a bit and then some more,
A whip and “get-up, gee and haw”,
Were both ox language and ox law.

Till heel flies came in on the scene,
And made a picture for the screen,
They put the oxen on the run,
With tails up high—it was no fun.

They made for nearest slough or brush,
I followed them in desperate rush,
The tethered cow too broke away,
Where could she be search as you may.

SUCH WAS LIFE

We fought mosquitoes, ants, and pest,
(And gophers plenty did molest,)
In spite of gloves and nets we wore,
They still drew blood till we were sore.

Through sod roof came the dripping rain,
The household goods to spoil and stain,
So pots and pans were set around,
Till sunshine did once more abound.

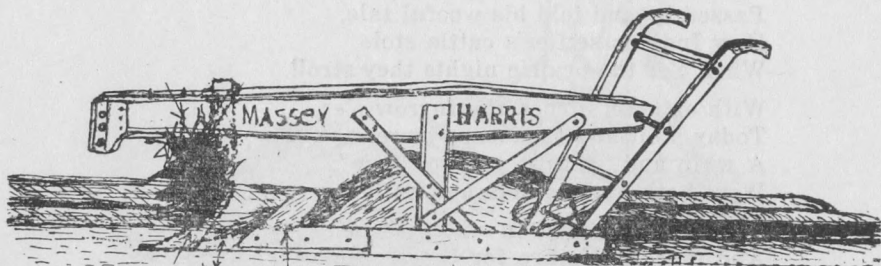
Could we forget the mothers brave?
Who tried so hard to help and save,
And fix and patch the only pair,
To look their best, yet longer wear.

Off to his bed the boy she'd send,
To get a chance his pants to mend,
Her light though dim, she'd knit and sew,
To keep her family on the go.

Her needle plied till late at night,
Remodelling clothes so they'd look right,
She could not buy new hat and coat,
Of modern styles that were afloat.

A cook she was so hard to beat,
The simplest food was made a treat,
No Xmas turkey on the slate,
Wild rabbit stuffed was on the plate.

She milked the cows 'mid smudge and heat,
And swatting tail her face would greet,
Yet hum, and sing and chant and pray,
In hopes the cow would gentle stay.



First four-horse brush-breaker in Didsbury area, with fin coulter, owned by M. Weber, replacing standing coulter—Roots and mulch gathering, solidly packed to lift the beam at times. Standing coulter holds roots and chokes under the beam. Fin allows roots to slide over, and are carried away with the furrow, and draws half a horse easier.

SUCH WAS LIFE

The sneaky Coyote prowled at night,
He sniffed the breeze—perchance he might
Find new aroma, which of course,
He fondly traces to its source

And in the hencoop newly found,
He brings his victim to the ground,
Triumphant! trots back to his den,
With pioneer mother's laying hen.

A mother with small children five,
Was left in sod-roofed shack to thrive,
The father went to put up hay,
To earn their grub, ten miles away.

Two days of rain came sifting through,
One child took sick, what could she do?
She walked a mile through grass and brush,
Her clothes were wet from splashing slush,

Her neighbor shared; supplied her need,
Returning now with joy and speed,
In shades of night she lost her track,
In vain she tried to find her shack.

Exhausted, weary, hopeless now,
She sank in slough, but then somehow,
She thought she heard her children cry,
Her weariness she must defy.

In Super-human strength she arose,
She followed sound and soon was close,
With joy she met her children five,
And thanked her God—they were alive.

No school, no church, no telephone,
In wilderness she taught her own,
Till teacher came out for his health,
An asset prized much more than wealth.

And so a private school was kept,
In lumber shed where no one slept,
A charge per day of ten cents each,
Was paid the teacher* for to teach.

One family sent a group of three,
The father could not pay the fee,
So cut a grindstone out of rock,
And paid his bill with sharpening stock.

Another made a window frame,
Through which a light could enter same.
To dismal shock of knotty pine,
Where I was forced to sleep and dine,

*My brother Eph. Weber.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Homestead regulations did demand,
Six months each year, sleep on your land,
You'd build a shack, five acres break,
The next year two, then fifteen stake.

Although no tax in pre-school days,
We paid high tax in other ways,
No culverts, bridges spanned the stream,
That was a dim long-distance dream.

When with a load of lumber crossed,
My blankets, feed, and lunch were lost,
The ice in mid stream failed to bear,
And down I went right then and there.

It lamed a horse as he was caught,
Mid ice chunks churning as he fought,
We bottom struck three feet below,
And there we were and could not go.

I cut the ice to river's edge,
So horses could climb up on ledge,
Then threw the lumber pieces each,
To where from land I could them reach.

I walked a good nine miles or more,
To keep from getting chilled or sore,
When I got home my clothes were dry,
But hungry, foot-sore, fagged was I.



A sod-roofed log shack—A homesteader doing duty on his homestead before door and window were set in was visited by a coyote one early morning. Needless to say, the coyote took to his heels—a fast get-away!

SUCH WAS LIFE

There was no store or restaurant grill,
Where one could get a luscious fill,
You carried lunch, where e'er you went,
Or fasted long, with hunger bent.

Today we go across the stream,
With heavy loads by truck or team,
No danger now of breaking through,
So thanks—including taxes too.

When camping by the river's edge,
The water froze a solid ledge.
The ice would crack, at forty below,
The moon a million diamonds show.

On needle point of spruce and pine,
The evergreens a diamond mine,
The curling smoke from burning bough,
With fragrance rose to heaven's mow.

The tent a haven for the night,
With spruce bough mattress laid aright,
And on it spread a bunch of hay,
Then cow-hide for a sheet we lay.

You talk about a princely bed,
With woolly pillow for your head,
And feather tick from fowl of old,
Defied and licked severest cold.

The coyote's shrill exciting howl,
Was mixed with screech and hooting owl,
Sometimes lay 'wake till early morn,
When rays of sun were newly born.

As cooks we were a "bunch of greens",
We'd burn our hands and spill the beans,
Forget the salt when cooking stew,
And burn the meat and porridge too.

One trip we brought a special pie,
Our appetite and hopes were high,
Of course it froze at forty below,
It had to be thawed out you know.

A little tin-camp stove was used,
To cook and heat—it ne'er refused,
Into the oven went the pie,
While other dishes we would try.

When suddenly there was a blast,
And smoke and flame were coming fast,
We rescued pie though black and charred,
Inside it still was frozen hard.

SUCH WAS LIFE

In gunny sacks we wrapped our feet,
Plus binder twine—would they look neat?
Then into snow, cut wood and post,
And logs and rails we needed most.

From tree crook roots we hewed our sleigh,
And shod with iron the crude old way,
And treked our sticks o'er bridgeless trail,
Before the ice in creeks would fail.

A settler built a blacksmith shop,
With sod enclosed right over top,
Was cool when hot, in winter warm,
Leaked like a seive in bad rain storm.

Supplies were fifty miles away,
It made it difficult to say,
How soon he could do work for you
Sometimes it took a week or two.

When night herd for a round-up camp,
Where horses tear and wildly ramp
From thunder clap and lightning flash,
And into outer darkness dash.

All sense of where we came to be,
Suddenly passed away from me,
When with a jolt my horse stood still,
I listened—then came a deadly chill.

Another jump would send us o'er,
A cut of eighty feet or more,
To Oldman River's maddened rush,
Against the rocks to dash and crush*.

We human kind forget the fact,
A horse knows better how to act,
His instinct prompts a quick defence,
We rightly call it good horse sense.

In moonlight or in darkest night,
When flies or storms would cause a plight,
Or scores of handicaps would mix,
The horses were in camp by six.

In search for stock through hill and dale,
And daylight had begun to fail,
I came upon a lonely shack,
With scarce a sign of trail or track.

A form of life then came to view,
And said "Hi there!" as pioneers do,
"Kum in and ha' a cup o' tea,
Ye're miles fram hame, who e'er ye be".

*My Brother's experience (Ed. Weber).

SUCH WAS LIFE

"Did cattle stray this way?" I said,
He seemed perplexed and scratched his head,
"When did they leave you nicht I ask,
And put ye on this grimly task?"

"Last night" I said; "Me thinks" said he,
"They nicht in yon direction be",
"For when mosquitoes give them chase,
They are dead sure the wind to face."

"But when cold wind or rain storm blows,
You nicht depend that's where they goes,"
Nor will they stop until they find,
Some shelter for to lurk behind."

His shoes, no doubt, they once were new,
But now his toes were looking through,
His greasy pants had patch and splice,
His cap one time the home of mice.

His whiskers matted like a pad,
Had now turned gray—looked kind o' sad,
Yet while he did not look so nice,
His words were full of sound advice.

"In this great land, me lad" said he,
"Ye must be times a hero be,
If things gang wrong and you are tricked,
Mak oop yer mind ye'll n'er be licked."

"This country calls the stout an' brave,
We can na' do wi' lawless knave,
Wi' British Rule we'll be secure,
We need na' fear o' that I'm sure".

"The red coats mak's their usual tours,
And prove they be a friend of yours,
But woe to those attemptin' crime,
The mounties gits them every time."

"The Indians too now on reserve,
Have great respect for red-coat nerve,
Through treaty signed long ago, (1877)
While sunshine lasts and rivers flow."

I love their leather craft and art,
Their beadwork, and excelling part,
Hunting, fishing—it all was theirs,
The Spirit great had made them heirs.

At mission School in Morleyville,
They taught young Indians white man's skill,
To read and write, to cook and sew,
And many facts worthwhile to know.

SUCH WAS LIFE



MISS E. WEBER AND MR. FRED BUDGEON

Miss Weber was cook and Miss Buehler was matron in Morley in 1897. Mr. Fred Budgeon taught use of shop and farming tools. Romance took the upper hand and slyly started to command.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Reverend Niddrie taught and preached,
That aim and purpose might be reached,
McDougall kept the chiefs at bay,
When war uprisings came their way.

Matron Buehler; she supervised,
Miss Weber cooked and girls advised,
Fred Budgeon taught the boys at school,
The use of shop and farming tool.

Chief Bearspaw now is eighty-five,
But still is here and quite alive,
To tell us how McDougall fought,
To bring their tribal wars to nought,

With snowshoe, dog team, saddle horse,
He travelled far—chose well his course,
To cheer the dying, help the sick,
When smallpox did their victim pick.

The Chief as well recalls by name,
The staff that in the nineties came,
And served the school in that decade,
When times were hard and needed aid.

But romance took an upper hand,
And started slyly to command,
So in due time the wedding march,
Pealed forth from homesteads rustic arch.

The Weber-Budgeon nuptial tied,
And off to Carstairs they did ride,
To start and live in union rife,
And put to test real pioneer life.

A shop he built on town-site near,
And served as blacksmith year by year,
Till farming interest overtook,
The blacksmith shop he then forsook.

We had heard the "Pipe of Peace",
A legend that will never cease,
A federal vote was coming due,
With us of course the votes were few.

Four men who came from Calgary South,
Spoke in the towns as they went north,
Conservative and Liberals too,
Were bold to say what they would do.

They lashed out slander, hate and scorn,
Till parties into shreds were torn,
We wondered if their democrat,
Would hold four men who fought and spat,

SUCH WAS LIFE

When out of sight, as they supposed,
The "Bottle of Peace" was then exposed,
Each in their turn their quota took,
From then on there was peace outlook.

No change has come since ninety eight,
Hypocrisy is up to date,
How many bottles would it take,
Till politicians peace would make.

We think of ninety seven and eight,
When Klondyke Rush was in its heighth,
Billy Wilson and Hugh McLean,
Were Veterans of the Klondyke train.

Their tales of venture, risk and pluck,
Oft in a pinch but never stuck,
They later to the district came,
With memories fond of Klondyke fame.

A guard was plowed in ninety nine,
Eight furrows on the township line,
From Dog Pound to the railway track,
When fires came we fought them back.

The guard was plowed to save the feed,
In sloughs and upland, we did need,
But heavy August rains did fill,
The sloughs with water—hay was nil.

All over guards kept fires out,
The brush had now grown tall and stout,
So in good time we had to clear,
Some brush away, a crop to rear.

The axe was slow—caused sweat of brow,
And so we tried to make somehow,
A rig that faster work would do,
And cut the brush much lower too.

In nineteen ten a tractor came,
'Twas William Liesemer ordered same,
We studied hard and kept right on,
Tried different ways, then hit upon.

A set of beams with shares attached,
When pushed ahead, the brush was snatched,
And pushed aside in windrows too,
To let the engine clear pass through.

A pioneer venture, it was new,
And crude and rough in make-up too,
Two hundred acre job was done,
Olds' Gov't. farm; a victory won.

SUCH WAS LIFE

6500 acres cut from 1910 to 1920 from Carstairs to Innisfail, a saving of approximately \$35,000.00. Notice this test—In 1917 a test was made on two plots—one cut by hand with axe. The other, the same size, was cut with power cutter. They were threshed separately. The yield in favor of power cutting more than paid for the cost of cutting the brush. A poor seed bed as you'll note, air pockets drying soil, as stubs prevent furrow from lying flat.



This line showing the surface level of the furrow when brush cutter has slashed the crown of roots. Upper furrow when cut with axe, disc and harrow hitting high spots only.

From that time on we cut some more,
It proved a regular summer's chore,
From Carstairs in that section south,
To Innisfail in the country north.

East and west for fifteen miles,
The brush was cut and burnt in piles,
Nor would the cost be hard to bear,
Since greater yield would help to share.

It scalped the clustered bunch of brush,
And cut the roots with ground quite flush,
The breaking done with greater ease,
Made better job; was sure to please.

A better seed bed could be made,
As furrows were more smoothly laid,
No hollows from the stubby root,
Or snags to cut the horse's foot.

Nor would the implements be torn,
By catching snags; for they were shorn,
The soil would better moisture keep,
The farmer heavier crop would reap.

For "Bulldozer", it led the way,
Which few years later came to stay,
No longer axe with sweat of brow,
The "Dreadnaught" rig, it does it now.

When student preachers rode the range,
They found a great and definite change,
Fancy pulpit or painted seat,
Was never seen where they would meet.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Log shack kitchens—no seats to spare,
On blocks of wood—but who would care?
Or maybe too a box would fit,
For some young lad to climb and sit.

The preacher brought his hymn books too,
Would start a hymn and sing it through,
Sometimes a voice sang loud ahead,
And then again would break instead.

Mouth organ or a violin,
Sometimes would help and tune right in,
One time when voice and music chimed,
A dog outside swung in and timed.

His doleful howl out-classed us all,
In volume, tone and tenor bawl,
The dog had rendered well his share,
The service ended then and there.

A church was built in ninety six,
For twenty miles we hauled the sticks,
A landmark many miles to south,
And east and west—and ten miles north.

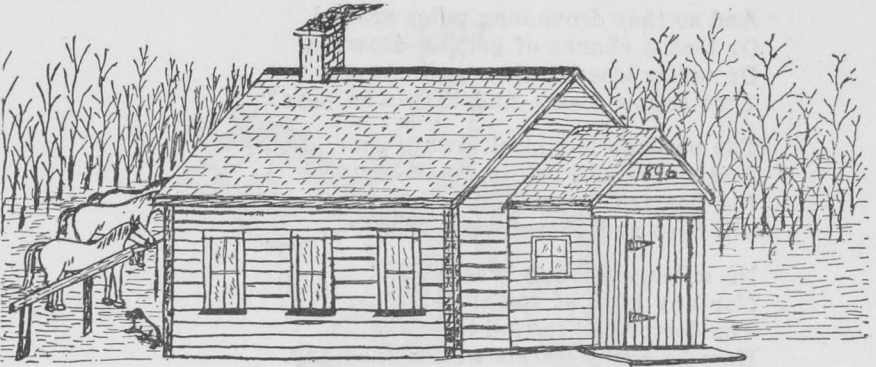
In buckboard, gig or saddle horse,
Or homemade sled, or walk of course,
Or group of three would come astride,
On bareback horse—how they could ride!

No Easter bonnet or new dress,
How old the style, that was your guess,
Nor did it matter what the shade,
It was their best, at that homemade.



Primitive tourists, on the Morley Trail from Red Deer, passing Didsbury four miles west, now entering the foothills.

SUCH WAS LIFE



Log Church—The labor on this church cost twelve dollars in cash.

If pants were patched or coat was torn,
They still were such that could be worn,
It all went in as part of life,
To fill the role of pioneer strife.

The freedom from that social fear,
Implied, expressed throughout the year,
Each one made up their own design,
The comments made were most benign.

A branch of church work was begun,
"The Beulah Home" Edmonton,
Where girls could go when hearts were torn,
And hopes were low—almost forlorn.

A Christian home from worry free,
With high ideals, where they could be,
And think, reflect in prayerful mood,
And walk in ways that pay with good.

Here they would gain new confidence,
A lift in life, would recompense,
And gird them with an outlook new,
In former days they never knew.

Here they were taught domestic work,
No duty small allowed to shirk,
As citizens who do their best,
Now on a par with all the rest.

No doctors, vet or quack was there,
To bind up wounds when in despair,
So remedies of every kind,
Were brought and used that we could find.

When country doctors did arrive,
For miles and miles they had to drive,
Few bridges spanned the swollen streams,
They often could not cross with teams.

SUCH WAS LIFE

And so they drove long miles around,
Or took a chance of getting drowned,
Or suffer loss in other ways,
That follow risks—and then who pays?

The patients too, most always poor,
And who would pay in case no cure,
Big hearted, brave along they went,
Till time and energy were spent.

No mileage subsidy was paid,
Nor any kind of social aid,
The doctor had to find his way,
How he could get his well earned pay.

He carried shovel, axe and rope,
Not to need them was his hope,
He sometimes had a horse relay,
To get him where his patient lay.

No road signs that would help to find,
The ranch or shack he had in mind,
The branching trails led here and there,
He'd drive all night yet get nowhere.

Sometimes he would a driver keep,
So he could get a cat-nap sleep,
"Keep those nags a stepping Harry,
An urgent case—do not tarry".

A kitchen table, coal oil lamp,
Were means to work with in the camp,
To operate, would he succeed?
A chance he took in dire need.

The patient in due time pulled through.
It proved the doctor's worth anew,
How in this great and spacious west,
The pioneer doctors came and blest.

A summer's breaking now was sown,
To grains of various kinds then grown,
We closely watched it come to head,
And wished it would be ripe instead.

A threshing rig was needed too,
For us a second hand would do,
So in good time it landed here,
To thrash the grain that grew that year.

Each sheaf was handled from the stack,
The straw was piled up at the back,
To use for stock the winter through,
And be a splendid shelter too.

SUCH WAS LIFE



A typical Mounty covering his beat among homesteaders and ranchers located around. We called them "Red Coats". We signed their pass-book whenever they appeared as proof to their headquarters that they made the circuit.

One man had first to cut the band,
Then shift it to the feeder's hand,
The cylinder would take it in,
And soon the grain was in the bin.

Ten horses hitched to five armed power,
Went in a circle by the hour,
A driver with long whip in hand,
Stood on the platform to command.

Three men with teams at steady pace,
Moved the rig from place to place,
They rolled in blankets for the night,
And slept on floors or where they might.

The bachelor cook mixed up a stew,
As best he could to feed a crew,
Of thirteen men with appetite,
That stopped at nothing within sight.

Great flocks of geese came from the north,
They honked their honk en route to south,
Through night and day as if to say,
Goodbye cold north, we cannot stay.

The prairie sod was cold and rough,
For years it had grown wild and tough,
And ere you can a garden grow,
You must prepare the soil to sow.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Potatoes too we had to buy,
For winter use and seed supply,
November sixth we took the trail,
And landed north in Innisfail.

The day was hot like summer heat,
We sweated sitting on the seat,
The bags we filled before the night,
To get an early start we might.

We slept in dusty old log shack,
Where wind came howling through a crack,
We hit the trail, although 'twas dark,
We feared a storm the day would mark.

The snow flakes soon came thick and fast,
Then gust of wind would make a blast,
There was no place to turn aside,
To feed the team—no place to hide.

Nor could we make a cup of tea,
To warm us up internally,
The wagon wheels ground out a moan,
A zero weather's natural tone.

We reached our home quite late at night,
Cold and hungry, with sore frost bite.
Some 'taters frozen like a brick,
Although we had them covered thick.

To Carbon where there was good coal,
Two settlers went—'twas quite a stroll,
Those sixty miles, all overland,
Each had four horses to command.

No trail to guide them to the place,
They just kept driving into space,
Nor could they strike a lonely shack,
Where they could ask for trail or track.

Two days they searched, but all in vain,
They could no information gain,
Of place where coal mine could be found,
And so they said "We'll turn around."

A four-day tedious nagging drive,
But glad they could get home alive,
Another item in the book,
Of pioneer life, with dim outlook.

The preacher too played pioneer,
In saddle or in buckboard gear,
The lonely settler he would see,
When miles of travel there would be.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Peculiar situations meet,
Adventure, humor, were complete,
Nor did he mind what ere befell,
He always would his mission tell.

One day a calf just newly born,
Was found in mud, almost forlorn,
The women dragged it to the shack,
And rubbed it dry till life came back.

It fell asleep beside the stove,
When to the door the preacher drove,
"What can we do?" one woman said,
"We'll hide the calf beneath the bed."

And with a plunge in desperate plight,
They had the calf clear out of sight,
Quite relieved from anxious fear,
That nothing more would interfere.

A blanket hung up on a rope,
Divided bed from kitchen scope,
Exchange of greetings came about,
A cup of tea was handed out.

Now might we have a verse or two,
From God's own word—'tis well to do,
When in the midst of service call,
The calf let out a frightful bawl.

Fear and consternation reigned,
Until the matter was explained,
The preacher looked with great askance,
What had he done by any chance?

Did one of his good friends display,
A weakness that she could not stay?
From whence had come that awful shout,
That gave him chills and knocked him out?

As time went on more settlers came,
Enough to play the soccer game,
Alberta Central League was coined,
The local team they gladly joined.

From Calgary, city in the south,
The towns to Red Deer in the north,
When all the scheduled games were run,
Our local team had medals won.

They put the town upon the map,
Although quite small—that handicap,
Was overcome by resolute will,
A Dutchman's nerve that filled the bill.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Supplies were needed in exchange,
For produce from the homestead range,
So to the town on lonely trail,
A long day's driving without fail.

It took almost three days by train,
The fare, five bucks, was ghastly drain,
On meagre cash of pioneer,
That he had saved throughout the year.

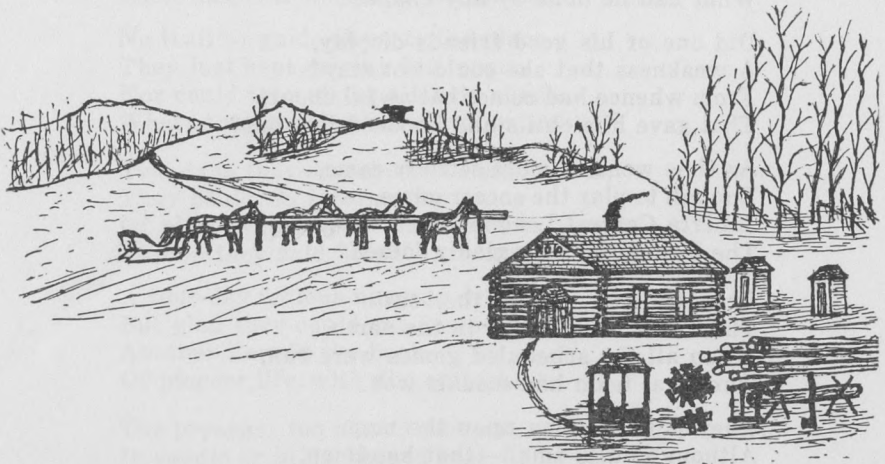
Our lunch we took—in barn we slept,
Where horses for the night were kept,
We had to save the ten cent ways,
To get a start in early days.

It took two loads of oats to pay,
For saddle, blanket, feed barn stay,
Besides six days of tedious travel,
In case it rained—there was no gravel.

There was no bridge across Nose Creek,
High water would box level seek
No shack to dot the bald North Hill,
No scratch or sign the soil to till.

The only item on lonely trail,
"Crossfield to be: could tell its tale,
A pile of bones—whence came they forth?
From whisky Coulee west and south.

O'er cut-bank trap, the hunters chased,
A herd of Buffalo—wild they raced,
They cut their tongues, some hides they took,
The mass of slaughter they forsook.



Heavy on the Three R's—A typical country school in pioneer days, four miles from the nearest in the district.

SUCH WAS LIFE

With hardware and a general store,
In nineteen one, soon there were more,
Who thought it wise to start and deal,
The country now had made appeal.

With crops and livestock coming fast,
A solid town would sure be cast,
A creamery, drug store, followed close,
To livery barn and boarding house.

A two-roomed school was added when,
The school aged pupils counted ten,
Trustee and teachers now in line.
The set-up now was going fine.

The printing office came to view,
To tell the public what was new,
And so the "Pioneer" was born,
And ever since it blew its horn.

The realtor and lawyer too,
Hung out their shingles with a view,
To help along in their own sphere,
While dentist also did draw near.

A Council too was organized,
Public works now supervised,
New sidewalks kept us in the dry,
When mud and slush were ankle high.

For new hotel there was demand,
As town and country both expand,
District centres became a fact,
So travellers came to make contact.

Kansas*, Elkton, Bergen west,
Harmattan too like all the rest,
Served its district in good grace,
And therewith built a friendly place.

While D. M. Stewart went twelve miles east,
And made a splendid start at least,
A creamery with a store attached,
Besides a post office that matched.

But fire later made its claim,
And totally destroyed the same,
Neapolis was in the past,
But friendly Stewart was still steadfast.

Then Sunny Slope, a halfway place,
In pioneer days stood in good grace,
When settlers hauled a load of coal,
To trade it for mine-prop and pole.

*Now changed to Wescott.

SUCH WAS LIFE

On fifty mile long Carbon Trail,
Old Tony though, would seldom fail,
One day the storm was truly such,
Old Tony had to buck too much.

He reached a lonely wayside shack,
Fagged, half frozen in his track,
Dick, the bachelor, that noon had left,
To help his neighbor all bereft.

But doors in those days knew no lock,
The weary traveller and his stock,
Were welcome to what they could find,
Homesteader's heart was big and kind.

On kitchen stove was pot of meat,
Which Tony found to be a treat,
Next morning Dick again came back,
Asked Tony how he found the shack.

"Your meat was fine, slept like a dog",
"What! Coyote meat cooked for my dog?"
But Tony never heaved a sigh,
He gave a "thank you" in reply.

Of interest still, yet scarcely known,
The country west had pasture grown,
For General Middleton's armed force,
Enroute to Duck Lake's battle course. (1885).

A transport driver, Howard Graves,
Remembered well the place they grazed, (1885).
So when his southern hills went blank,
He came to Dog Pound's river bank.

Here feed and water—pastures green,
Were better far than where he'd been,
From city's site he hauled his shack,
With horse team and old style hayrack.

He pioneered with might and main,
A thrifty herd soon was his again,
"The Brunswick Ranch" he named the place,
Today the home of famed white-face.

Reverses too we had to face,
From hail and frost as was the case,
Sometimes the windows would be smashed,
And crops and gradens they were crashed.

Or when the frost would hit the plain,
And spoil the quality of grain,
The price reduced below the cost,
And half a season's work was lost.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Our market too was handicapped,
For things we sold the price was tapped,
Deducted profit and the freight,
To things we bought they'd add the rate.

Crop insurance, at times a fake,
When bumper crop we had at stake,
We paid the price—hail came too late,
So pioneer was doomed by fate.

When crop was good the price was low,
We hardly knew what grain to sow,
Hauled oats to town for fifty miles,
Got twenty cents, yet still wore smiles.

More shops and stores and houses new,
Kept going up—more churches too,
An opera house and Union Bank,
Were factors added to the rank.

A barber shop and pool room too,
You get a shave and looked like new,
While to the little photo nook,
You come and get your pictures took.

A factory making sash and doors,
And woodwork needed in the stores,
Was built by several local men,
Employed a crew of five to ten.

Two pioneer brothers Fred and Mart,
Were anxious for to get a start,
Each had a team and wagon gear,
From saw mill west hauled lumber here.

One had overalls quite new,
The other? Well, his knees looked through,
So they devised a trip offset,
And swapped their pants when e're they met.

The good pair to the town was worn,
To sawmill went those that were torn,
A sample of what pioneers,
Were forced to do in early years.

There was no fence on right-of-way,
To guard the track from stock that stray,
In spite of noise when whistle blew,
They still held fort till chased by crew.

No sooner was the crew on train,
When stock would be on track again,
What words were coined we would not guess,
But chances are they did not bless.

SUCH WAS LIFE

There was no gravel on the track,
The bed was soft, the soil was black,
The rails were light and train was slow,
Yet rocked its victims to and fro.

Conductor Clark had hands abused,
In early days when links were used,
They raised the link and cleared the hand,
Before the coupling bump would land.

But twice a week the train went through,
And brought the mail—supplies, a few,
Sometimes the train was late you know,
With mailbag stood in rain or snow.

No platform, shelter where to hide,
First years all things were open wide,
Then came a ten-by-twelve-foot shack,
A haven set close to the track.

I slept there when I built the store,
For Robertson—that was before,
The place had given signs to grow,
And business yet was very slow.

When fast asleep in dead of night,
A freight train came that caused a fright,
A thundering noise—it shook the ground,
In haste I moved and looked around.

'Twas Ringling Brothers circus train,
It steamed and whistled in the rain,
The water splashed out from the track,
And sent a plenty in the shack.

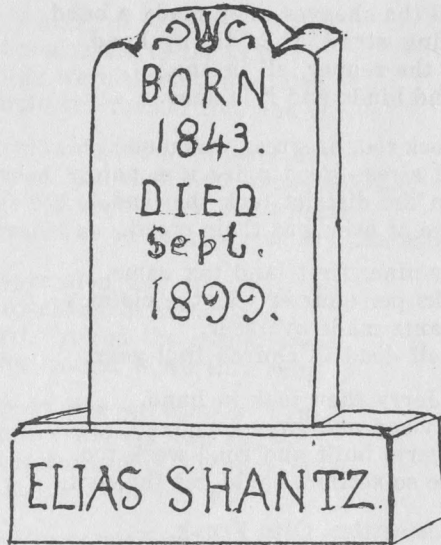
More grain was grown, more livestock too,
We had demand the Crow's Nest through,
New towns were built along new line,
They needed horse and feed in mine.

So elevators and livestock yard,
Were built to speed and not retard,
The progress of the pioneers,
That had been made in former years.

In nineteen three the town of Frank,
Was buried 'neath its mountain bank,
It hurt our trade to some extent,
Since both livestock and grain were sent.

C. Peterson with calf-skin vest,
From Kitchener east, he came out west,
For sixty years that vest was worn,
And to this day was never torn.

SUCH WAS LIFE



THE FIRST BURIAL IN DIDSBURY

This stone was broken from a sandstone rock and dressed by Otto Frank. Mr. Shantz fell dead while talking to the Sunday School.

He, "Justice of the Peace" was sworn,
A legal court, though small, was born,
It gave the mounties help in case,
A lawless knave had trial to face.

When for oath or affirmation,
Or papers needed attestation,
Or when in case disputes arise,
His clients then he did advise.

An undertaker now in place,
He'd serve the district in good grace,
When grief and sorrow would depress,
And wrap the home in deep distress.

His gentle care of passed on friend,
He'd sympathy to us extend,
'Twas solace under heavy load,
Of vacancy in our abode.

Came farm machinery and supplies,
The dealers list it would comprise,
The late improvements for the farm,
And save the farmer's back and arm.

Instead of throwing seed by hand,
And with the sack walk over land,
Then with the harrow drag it o'er,
The seed drill now would do the chore.

SUCH WAS LIFE

We raked the sheaves, then made a band,
By twisting straw, then tie by hand,
But now the reaper, all in one,
It cuts and binds and it is done.

In livestock too, progress was made,
Purebred sires—good price was paid,
And soon the district took the lead,
Improvement ever was their creed.

In ninety-nine, first land tax came,
Two bucks per quarter was the claim,
Elias Shantz made overseer,
But he fell dead in church that year.

His son Jerry then took in hand,
He supervised and gave command,
Few culverts built and road work too,
Was done so settlers could get through.

A sculptor settler, Otto Frank,
Dug out a slab from sandstone bank,
And cut it like a tombstone cast,
It still defies the weather's blast. (Since 1899).

The first to occupy a grave,
In plot that J. Y. Shantz then gave,
As gift to district, he had planned,
That pioneers would soon demand.

From C.P.R. decree went forth,
To close the crossing in the north,
And open one a block away,
As though the town had naught to say.

With his gang the foreman came,
And started working on the game,
But citizens were quite alert,
And fought for justice with a spurt.

Our lawyer, J. E. A. McLeod,
With legal word advised all out,
While crew to luncheon they did send,
Our boys their work did spurtly rend.

And so the crossing still is there,
For traffic of the town to share,
And all who cross will bear in mind,
To look and listen, and safety find.

The price of grain in nineteen four,
Had dropped away beneath the floor,
A local market over-stocked,
Products in every line were blocked.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Price of milk, of eggs and butter,
Almost sent them to the gutter,
Hogs only were three cents alive,
How could the farmer live and thrive?

The merchants oft in pioneer day,
Took wood and coal, and some took hay,
In trade for goods they had to sell,
Since cash was scarce, they knew quite well.

Both depression and suppression,
Was the verdict in expression,
Prosperity 'round the corner went,
We never caught it worth a cent.

In nineteen five we came of age,
Alberta now was its own sage,
A cabinet formed, a Premier made,
And M.L.A.'s to be his aid.

C. Hiebert was our local choice,
From town and country's voting voice,
Municipal set-ups organized,
Then Councils further supervised.

We formed a local U.F.A.,
To help the farmers find their way,
To build a better rural life,
And help each other in their strife.

The country west into the town,
Built telephone line all its own,
Providing useful service new,
Since both the town and country grew.

Creeks and rivers soon were spanned,
Had graded roads throughout the land,
Then mail routes and more telephones,
Extended service in new zones.

An automobile found its way,
Into the town and came to stay,
Into the country to the west,
A Sunday spin, just for a test.

The family too the trip enjoyed,
With neither horse nor mule employed,
But cars sometimes a bit selfwilled,
Need coaxing by a driver skilled.

But plead and pet, it would not go,
Or push and pull, it still said no,
On Monday morning Riley Moon,
With Ox team towed it in by noon,

SUCH WAS LIFE

The Ox team—relic of the past,
Is in the lead—the car comes last,
Sure and steady they won the race,
Car could not move an inch of space.

In nineteen seven it was agreed,
More school rooms were an urgent need,
So bonds to build a nine-roomed school,
Were issued then as was the rule.

To build a school of brick and stone,
Took skilled men and a good sized loan,
In pioneer days great shifts were made,
Foundations good must now be laid.

The trustees planned—they thought of Youth,
They must be taught both fact and truth,
To fit them for a good career,
To meet life's duties without fear.

More new teachers now were hired,
Two for high school were required,
Then to the town more pupils came,
For higher grades they had an aim.

"Shop and Home Ec." now were heeded,
Subjects that through life are needed,
"Do it yourself" oft in demand,
So qualify both mind and hand.

But soon the school rooms were too small,
Increasing numbers came each fall,
For Senior grades there was demand,
To build a highschool trustee planned.

A five-roomed school we had to build,
And soon it too was being filled,
Aggressive youth could now prepare,
For callings Pioneers could not share.

Then through the years the students treked,
To University and checked,
For doctors, lawyers, druggists too,
For dentist, teachers not a few.

Industrial or commercial art,
Or sciences, that needful part,
To know what comes from mine and air,
And with mankind their wisdom share.

For nurses too, they qualified,
And rare positions occupied,
In institutions where good health,
Is prime objective, not of wealth.

SUCH WAS LIFE

From distant fields as well as near,
Good citizenship was what we'd hear,
Our sons and daughters played their part,
To make real life—a living art.

Fraternal orders and a band,
Each in their turn came well to hand,
They gave the town a splendid start,
In social welfare played their part.

Great crops were grown o'er country wide,
Abundant livestock raised beside,
But paid high price for flour still,
And so we built the "Rosebud Mill."

To ship wheat out and flour in,
In no way gave us chance to win,
The difference in the price was such,
Per bag, it would the dollar touch.

From sawmill thirty-six miles west,
O'er trails that put us to the test,
We hauled long timbers that would slide,
Sleigh or wagon from side to side.

The coldest winter under heaven,
Was that of nineteen six and seven,
To face that cold east wind all day,
And drive four brons was no play.

Arriving home at freezing point,
With gripping pains in every joint,
It made me think, "Well does it pay?"
But such was life in pioneer's day.

The buildings were complete by fall,
Machinery here, for to install,
Two millwrights from the east were hired,
They worked long hours till they were tired.

On New Year's Day of nineteen eight,
The wheels first turned to try their fate,
'Twas new addition to the town,
That gave it more or less renown.

Exchange for flour and porridge meal,
And feed for stock made up the deal,
With farmers for the wheat they brought,
A saving then and there was wrought.

From east and west the patrons came,
From north and south it was the same,
For fifty miles they made the trek,
Long trails their zeal would never check.

SUCH WAS LIFE

In timbered sections there was need,
Their families too, they had to feed,
They had no stock or grain to trade,
And so a deal for wood was made.

For forty years the mill ran true,
Some years the wheat was frozen too,
Twice it was burned right to the ground,
The cause of fires was never found.

With all the frost and hail and fire,
We dare not lose our faith, nor tire,
A pioneer must never be licked,
No matter how oft' he is tricked.

The constant change to earlier wheat,
Was handicap we had to meet,
The wheat that farmers liked to raise,
Did not make flour that got the praise.

Flour milled from garnet wheat,
A darker shade, though tasted sweet,
We had to find a market new,
In which to use that flour too.

Our cereal lines, in vitamins high,
With all pure food laws did comply,
Verdicts from the chemical test,
Placed "Rosebud" high among the best.

These cereals too were priced to save,
Pioneer homes not to enslave,
Those days—Messers "Nickel and Dime",
Were going strong—were in their prime.

Three hundred thousand in a lump,
Would make ambitious farmers jump,
But since it spread o'er forty years,
Of savings now, one seldom hears.

Cultural interest stronger grew,
With better class of stock in view,
So organized an annual show,
Of all the products we could grow.

Draft horses—heavy purebred sires,
Would always draw top class of buyers,
For heavier teams, were markets ripe,
To take the place of bronco type.

They still are needed on the range,
For one other kind they would exchange,
They're tough and have good staying power,
When riding calls for long long hours.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Single or double harness class,
We need more style high tests to pass,
The easy riders too are sought,
Good prices paid when ever bought.

The pony class in riding scope,
Scored high when they had gentle lope,
Or when they move with pacing grace,
They always seem to take first place.

Beeves that carry big round steak,
You may depend red ribbons take,
The steer with neither shape nor size,
No longer used for meat supplies.

Dairy cows, with big flow of milk,
And hide that feels and shines like silk,
Replacing dogies from the range,
Have now come in and made a change.

And sheep with coat of finest wool,
With mutton chop a larder full,
And hogs of that real bacon type,
That "Greasies" off the markets wipe.

And fowl that high egg records show,
Then to the block the boarders go,
The children too had their real sports,
With picnic games of many sorts.

In needle and in artcraft work,
There too the ladies did not shirk,
The patterns were of quaint design,
And compliments were most benign.

Grains and grasses, garden truck,
There were plenty—were never stuck,
Goods baked and canned in nice array,
On tables set, made good display.

Premier Rutherford was on hand,
To open Fair, he gave command,
Although our first, and was quite small,
Good purpose was behind it all.

Dominion Fair for all the west,
Where every town could show their best,
Was held in Calgary nineteen eight,
Didsbury too hung out her slate.

Of all exhibits towns had shown,
A second prize was Didsbury's own,
Of grain and grass, of farm produce,
And many things of household use.

SUCH WAS LIFE

A show window of early day,
Potential greatness did display,
Its inspiration carried weight,
Throughout the years, right up to date.

A Women's Institute was born,
To help provide, improve, adorn,
Aspire toward projects still unknown,
For pioneers to call their own.

They found the means in their own way,
With ceaseless toil they helped to pay,
In social welfare plied their hand,
And brought about what they had planned.

A paralytic case was found,
When young Lamont, a cripple bound,
With specialists was placed for care,
That he too might life's blessings share.

The cemetery grown o'er with weeds,
Gave way to women's kindly deeds,
They lowered graves and sowed in grass,
So cutting bar could over pass.

What could be done in case of fire?
A fact the town could not retire,
And soon they bought an outfit new,
To fight a blaze with vol'n-teer crew.

An industry from local stock,
Was making concrete brick and block,
It would not burn, that was the claim,
When made of brick instead of frame.

A 'lectric plant of concrete brick,
Was built to do the lighting trick,
Its glowing lights shone in the night,
Both streets and houses beaming bright.

The dairy industry was checked,
When fire had the creamery wrecked,
But demand from city took its place,
For cream and milk stepped up the pace.

Town and district sport fans played,
What ever choice of game they made,
In summer golf, or baseball sport,
While others chose the tennis court.

Winter hockey with neighb'ring town,
They'd win their quota of renown,
In curling too, were many rinks,
There's chance to win so each one thinks.

SUCH WAS LIFE



A supplement to our yearly harvest. But get it if you can.

The ladies too ganged up in style,
And shot their rocks straight down the aisle,
Then see them sweep with might and main,
To coax their rock a point to gain.

For fish and game, when season's here,
Some wore big smiles, shot moose or deer,
But fish, though sometimes few were caught,
Yet stories rich were homeward brought.

Eggs were hatched from rinknecked pheasant,
To stock the land with bird more pleasant,
The streams were stocked with various trout,
Some grayling too were placed throughout.

In harness racing—quite an art,
They trained their steeds and then took part,
They sped around the half mile track,
And crossed the rope in no way slack.

In shoeing horses for the track,
Our local blacksmith bent his back,
To give the proper gait and throw,
Of foot and leg—he sure did know.

The Fulkerth horses in their class,
In jump or saddle surely pass,
The standard set in moving grace,
In easy riding set the pace.

SUCH WAS LIFE

At home, abroad in eastern test,
They usually got the ribbon's best,
From standpoint of real type 'n' action,
Here's where you get top satisfaction.

A picture show was introduced,
For entertainment it produced,
A film that had no word to say,
No color for to make display.

Chatauqua too came in its turn,
To show the folks what they could learn,
So brought in programs of all kinds,
Music, drama, inspiring minds.

'Twas New Year's Eve, that awful night,
When fire destroyed two blocks outright,
In nineteen fourteen's first new day,
Best part of town in ashes lay.

Like pioneer towns, a fire trap,
The flames the buildings would enwrap,
When wind had fanned tremendous blaze,
And there was naught to stop the raze.

When council in their chamber met,
New regulations then were set,
And forthwith issued new decree,
All buildings now of brick must be.

The town received a later shock,
When the spring, full half a block,
Farther south was burned up too,
And gave the town a black-eyed view.



New Year's Day 1914. Two blocks in the town lay in ruins.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Although the flames have had their turn,
"Pioneer nerve" just would not burn,
And from the ashes raised its head,
"We'll build a better town," it said.

And ere the smouldering embers died,
New hope and vision were applied,
The clang of industry was heard,
And workmen to their task were spurred.

And soon the town in its new dress,
Came forth its beauty to express,
And through the years progressive aid,
Was toward the country's welfare paid.

A library full of truthful book,
To give our youth a sane outlook,
With careful choice was now installed,
A challenge great had now been called.

Town and province are to the fore,
To guide and train with reading lore,
They both assist with means and care,
To add new books that merit share.

Then graded books to schoolroom came,
To 'nlighten pupils' minds and frame,
Them for absorbing greater truth,
Beyond the plain of junior youth.

Then came the war cry's clarion call,
Our sons and daughters gave up all,
And to the country's rescue came,
To save the Union Jack's name.

We think of those on Flander's Field,
And those who limb and health did yield,
Their sacrifice we'll ne'er forget,
We'll honor those who're with us yet.

Family circles suffered breaks,
We'll ne'er be slaves what'er it takes,
To hold our freedom dearly bought,
By ancestors who bled and fought,

The Legion has its rightful place,
In keeping soldiers in good grace,
In peacetime too, as well as war,
With country they were fighting for.

When children lost their parents dear,
And haunted with that gnawing fear,
Of separation from each other,
Or maybe had no sister, brother.

SUCH WAS LIFE

The Reverend Wood and Mrs. Wood,
Were deeply moved with orphanhood,
And with that deep convicting call,
They gave the best they had—their all.

And while in Olds in early days,
They helped themselves in many ways,
They did some large-scale gardening then,
Had several cows and chicken pen.

A team to work and go about,
That gave them quite a good work-out,
They taught the boys and girls to work,
Gave discipline they could not shirk.

In line like soldiers keeping step,
They marched to Sunday School with pep,
When they came home there was the meal,
That satisfied their junior zeal.

We loved to see that family pact,
How Mrs. Wood with kindly tact,
Would train and guide them in their task,
They'd gladly do what she would ask.

Their goodwill smiles more than repaid,
For products folks would leave in aid,
You felt an atmosphere serene,
A lofty purpose could be seen.

Increasing numbers came to share,
The home where good parental care,
Was giving orphans in distress,
A chance to gain a kind redress.

For better home there was great need,
To shelter, teach, and clothe, and feed,
The Bowness home was up for sale,
Christian sentiment must prevail.

A small deposit held the deal,
Then Reverend Wood made strong appeal,
For help to pay for new abode,
A marvelous deed — an episode.

Town and country hands would join,
With food and clothes as well as coin,
The truck would haul with all good will,
All shared the joy to coffers fill.

In nineteen sixteen 'twas cool and wet,
The crop was late, in mud 'twas set,
The binders sank and choked and stalled,
All kinds of trucks to fields were called.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Drums and engines were now bestowed,
For bullwheel's aid to carry load,
With half a swath they made the round,
But even then they'd scrape the ground.

Fifty engines one firm did sell,
They'd drive the gear of binder well,
The bullwheel's load in half was cut,
And saved it from a sinking rut.

Sometimes a part of load we'd pack,
For several rods upon our back,
Or with long chain place horses where,
They footing had to pull and tear.

No professor on hand that solved,
The problems trips to town involved,
You had to squirm to wiggle out,
With pioneer nerve and muscle stout.

As roads were graded, ditches made,
More culverts too had to be laid,
Flooding waters from heavy rain,
Would have to find a ready drain.

An active firm of local men,
Began to make steel culverts when,
More roads were opened everywhere,
And hard to keep in good repair.

And when the cruel war had ceased,
Town and country's strength increased,
More acres sown that could sustain,
More dairy herds of better strain.

The Crystal Dairy came our way,
They built a plant—ran every day,
Called for cream with high butter fat,
And milk to fill their big cheese vat.

To date the cows were common herd,
But high producers were preferred,
And so the purebred dam and sire,
Imported were for keener buyer.

Eight years of pioneer work swept by,
Production now was growing high,
"The Record of Performance" soared,
"Alcartra Gerben" — world record scored.

Hays Dairy built a monument,
In honor of accomplishment,
United pioneer effort scored,
And greater inspiration spurred.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Akin to scientific breeding,
Is proper care and balanced feeding,
And dairymen with new out-look,
Their former ways they soon forsook.

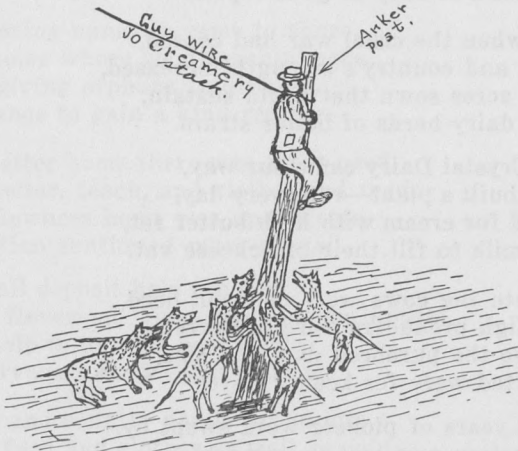
A ride in early years exposed,
A range cow choke as I supposed,
I rode amidst the grazing herd,
And found my guess a bit absurd.

The cattle staged a strange behave,
For mineral salts they seemed to crave,
Some would a buffalo shin bone chew,
While other licked at alkali slough.

An epidemic in twenty-three,
Caused heavy loss in stock to be,
The grass and feed lacked iodine,
For growth in young, including swine.

The incident of early days,
Now came to mind—and modern ways,
Of feeding mineral supplement,
Followed the trail the shin bone went.

About that time we pastured stock,
On bushland west, with spring from rock,
Beside the shack was flooring piled,
From bowling lane well soaked and oiled.



Steve was working in the mill and as he was heading for the restaurant at night, he furnished a unique work-out quite unconsciously.

Mr. Sinclair had six hounds which were kept in their kennel all day. Steve, not being aware of the fact that the hounds were let out at 6 p.m. to enjoy a bit of freedom, saw them coming toward him, and thinking they might tear him to pieces, climbed a nearby anchor post. This was good sport for the hounds and a chorus of barks was sent after him for several minutes and when they had dispersed Steve came down from his safety zone, still quite alarmed to know the meaning of the incident.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Four hundred feet were out of sight,
Did some one steal as well they might,
Two hundred head of cows and steers,
Chewed the lumber, so disappears.

A neighbor passing came to say,
"Dem cattle eats it up that way",
The slivers few that now were left,
Gave proof the cattle made the theft.

The pastures green they never gave,
The salts for which the stock would crave,
This truth the facts did now reveal,
And mineral feeds made strong appeal.

A mill supplying concentrate,
To supplement and compensate,
For lack of mineral in the soil,
Was added in with Rosebud toil.

Strong progeny was now the rule,
Thanks to the agricult'ral school,
For scientific courses taught,
To handle live stock as we ought.

Here too our efforts struck a snag,
The Government Vet, our herd would tag,
With "tubercular"—good cows went down,
The slaughter lane—that caused a frown.

Half price the dairyman received,
The loss was great, it deeply grieved,
But city's voice and cry was heard,
"We want no milk from tainted herd."

Tuberculosis then was fought,
And ever since the means were sought,
To give the curse its final blow,
So victims we'd no longer know.

The war was followed by the 'flu,
The doctors knew not what to do,
Nose masks were worn, the schools were closed,
To house the sick as was proposed.

Foods were rationed, cards would repeat,
Don't order more than you can eat,
Nor horde reserves till stale and old,
It's wasted ere its geen with mould.

Unexpected, both old and young,
Passed on, and their memorial sung,
The epidemic ran its course,
We wonder still, from whence its source?

SUCH WAS LIFE

The flu, a mighty blow had dealt,
Great need for hospital was felt,
The town and country soon agreed,
So grave a situation heed.

An eight roomed residence was bought,
A nursing staff for service brought,
But soon the place was found too small,
For nursing staff and patients all.

Two rooms were built, plus nurses home,
So greater numbers now could come,
And get there help in time of need,
And find the cure for which they'd plead.

In nineteen nineteen snow was deep,
October snow storm piled to keep,
No chinooks came, so we were fooled,
The winter's snow-bound schedule ruled.

Some fields they still had numerous stooks,
But now they looked like white-capped spooks,
Two feet of snow cold storage makes,
To hold the stooks like driven stakes.

The grader plowed on eastern plain,
So stock could nip in opened lane,
The hay was scarce, and price was high,
Old mushroomed strawstacks gave supply.

Nor was the Spring, an early one,
'Twas first of May, snow still was on,
More hay from east was now shipped in,
For dairymen their fight to win.

Per ton, the forty dollar whack,
Was paid to dealer on the track,
No pasture e're the end of May,
Till then we had to feed cows hay.

The farmers were in great dismay,
Could crops be grown at this late day?
But here again they nothing knew,
A good and early harvest grew.

As years of cropping came about,
The weeds were plenitful and stout,
An enemy so hard to fight,
The yield and dockage caused a plight.

They robbed the soil; there's shipping cost,
The dockage too, is always lost,
For cleaning plant there was great need,
To separate the tares from seed.

SUCH WAS LIFE

These can be fed with other grain,
And turn the losses into gain,
So cleaners were forthwith installed,
The challenge for clean grain was called.

Selective subjects one could choose,
And in spare time could fondly muse,
It all adds up as town asset,
When students' needs at home are met.

Here members of all caste and creed,
Could qualify in course they need,
With truth and love our bulwark strong,
We need not fear of going wrong.

Two thousand years of wear and tear,
Could never change the truth so rare,
But it will change the lives of men.
Though inmates of the vilest den.

Health unit, too, came into town,
It justly gave it some renown,
Transient nurses encircled wide,
With gracious aid through country-side.

More hospital room was in demand,
As town and country did expand,
A twenty-five bed dream came true,
Amply clad with equipment too.

Headquarters for enlarged school zone,
Didsbury now was proud to own,
With workshop serving points throughout,
A new set-up was brought about.

Warm buses come from country road,
And bring the pupils by the load,
To central school with features clad,
That make delinquent students glad.

A Board of Trade was organized,
Town and country would be advised,
Of needs and means, how to achieve,
And greater benefits receive.

Red Cross—that work of kindly deed,
Throughout the world, in time of need,
Here too we hung our banner high,
And wrought our quota of supply.

I.O.D.E.—a commonwealth,
Of daughter, working for the strength,
Of Empire, Independent, free,
Strong by common bond, Unity.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Their scholarships they would provide,
To help a prospect in their stride,
To fit for greater usefulness,
And more of life in turn express.

Salvation Army in their turn,
The town and country would not spurn,
And so a gracious work was wrought,
With folk donations, war cries bought.

Fraternal orders too arose,
And helped to grace the lives of those,
Who by misfortune had a share,
Of burdens more than they could bear.

From Lions Club there came a plea,
Memorial Hall there ought to be,
To honor those of each world war,
Their chivalry always adore.

Conviction strong enwrap the mind,
Our citizens ne'er lag behind,
In fostering a worthy cause,
Where motive high deserves applause.

For citizens of senior years,
Who battled hard—sometimes 'mid tears,
Their life they gave to build a state,
But now are victims of rude fate.

There's need for home, where they can dwell,
In peace and comfort during spell,
Of twilight years—they well deserve,
The best the country can preserve.

Here too, the town and district plays,
A fair and worthy game that pays,
A cash-and-welfare dividend,
It's rude, our friends away to send.

Agriculture or industry,
In medical or dentistry,
Or laboratory research strain,
Our youth it out success to gain.

In welfare and religious cause,
They work with zeal and seldom pause,
And out they've spread to fields afar,
And prove themselves to be at par.

Army 'n navy or airforce crew,
They'd rise to task although quite new,
Respond to freedom's battle cry,
Divine decree, in purpose high.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Soldier's rehabilitation,
Giving useful occupation,
To help the boys on their return,
Establish homes—their living earn.

No sacrifice too great to make,
When human welfare is at stake,
Unfurl the flag of Peace and Truth,
A slogan for our nation's youth.

Boy Scouts and Cubs are coming strong,
Prepared to serve they come along,
Girl Guides and Brownies in their turn,
They rise to task—their duties learn.

The town had now grown quite mature,
But sanitation still was poor,
And soon it had the watermain,
And sewer line that took the drain.

Then came our turn to use the gas,
And let the coal and ashes pass,
No longer bored with soot and dust,
Nor wielding shovel in disgust.

The country too became alive,
Electric current began to drive,
And turn the wheels is to make work light,
And light the homes with bulbs so bright.

Pump the water and milk the kine,
And saw the wood and save our spine,
No drudgery now upon the farm,
Hard jobs no longer caused alarm.

We dial the radio for the news,
On television see the views,
With power, heat and light at hand,
We'll heed the call: "Back to the Land".

Agricultural courses taught,
The 4-H Club to action brought,
With shop and economic sphere,
"Back to the land," is what we hear.

The winding trail of yester year,
Has given way to highway gear,
Cayuse foot prints no longer show,
On dusty path they used to go.

Could we forget the old log shack,
"Twas home sweet home" in years way back,
There sacrifice and mutual aid,
With grateful deeds was well repaid.

SUCH WAS LIFE

The old log school on crossroad stood,
For years it served the neighborhood,
There many a child three R's first learned,
Before to higher grades it turned.

The home-made sled by cayuse drawn,
Through snowdrift plied at fleeting dawn,
The school mam on her pony rode,
Two miles or more from her abode.

The ox team; horse and buggy days,
Faithfully served in many ways,
They too are sadly on the wane,
And doomed to travel memories lane.

All these, now relics of the past,
Gave way to tempered metal cast,
New fields of power and heat and light,
Have come to hand to serve a right.

Nor was memorial ever sung,
For "pioneer nerve" since it begun,
A driving force that ne'er retreats,
Each forward step it oft repeats.

There are deeper depths yet to explore,
And wider widths behind closed door,
There're longer lengths yet to unravel,
There're higher heights to climb and travel.

With sweat of brown and resolute will,
Its "Pioneer Nerve" and hard earned skill,
And who will be the Pioneers.
To break new sod through coming years?

The push-button and the spoon-fed folk,
Would never don a working yolk,
For fear of chafing that would mar,
Or even cause a tiny scar.

The prairie sod is conquered now,
More stubborn fields are still to plow,
And sow with seeds that harvest bring,
And crown with peace till joy bells ring.

The sod to break, it may be tough,
And full of rocks that make it rough,
But "Pioneer Nerve" and "golden rule",
Will prove to be the master tool.

The big bad wolf of bigotry,
Plays his games with sophistry,
In national and political gear,
In racial and religious sphere.

SUCH WAS LIFE

A four head monster of pretense,
Each head will fight in self defence,
To be triumphant o'er the rest,
Each factor says: "I am the best."

Destruction still is in man's mind,
Must we destroy, world peace to find?
We must destroy, so says God's word,
But not with gun or bloody sword.

Beatitudes and golden rule,
Are waiting human hearts to school,
And train for valiant fight to win,
O'er enemy that lurks within.

We'd like to pull the little mote,
Within our brother's eye—we note,
But with our beam obstructing view,
We'd pull the brother's eye out too.

The recipe for peace is clear,
It bears not hate nor gnawing fear,
It lends to those in dire need,
And democratic calls will heed.

The first commandment of the ten,
Directs aright the lives of men,
And that includes world brotherhood,
Said Christ the Lord—he understood.

Was "Peace on Earth" proclaimed in vain?
Did angels' song not make it plain?
Is "good will to men" a fairy tale?
Will selfish minds o'er truth prevail?

Good Santa Claus comes once a year,
As myth he fills mankind with cheer,
Then surely Christ, who conquers wrong,
Can speed his "Good will" all year long.

Or is there not enough Good Will,
For every human heart to filil?
Or will I want and waste and die,
By spreading out my scant supply?

Strange it seems, we generate more,
By sharing what we have in store,
It has the means to solve or blast,
Its way through stubborn creed or caste,

Or old age hardened politics,
That never can be solved by tricks,
National problems will compromise,
If proven good will supervise.

SUCH WAS LIFE

On upright pole in single spot,
Didsbury then a tiny dot,
Scarcely observed as you went by,
Yet power house of great supply.

There, pioneer seed from valiant hand,
Was hid amid this wondrous land,
And soon great stores for world avail,
Plied o'er steel rails, for ocean sail.

Besides the seed that grows in earth,
A generating seed of worth,
Was likewise sown and brought rich yield,
In moral and in religious field.

Our youth spread out o'er land and sea,
To carry good will song to free.
Benighted minds in darkness caught,
And bring them light so dearly bought.

Had neither kind of seed been sown,
And upright pole clung to its own,
The one-by-six-foot sign of yore,
Would long have waned to be no more.

We think of all this vast domain,
That pioneers turned to national gain,
Inspired minds with sweat of brow,
Have brought about our greater now.

Nor is this now the ultimate,
Of things to come in newer state,
Increased momentum, too, will score,
Its pioneer nerve still in the fore.

With mooring deep in solid rock,
No force can bend or move its block.
Its hold is firm, its base is truth,
That knows no time, no age, no youth.



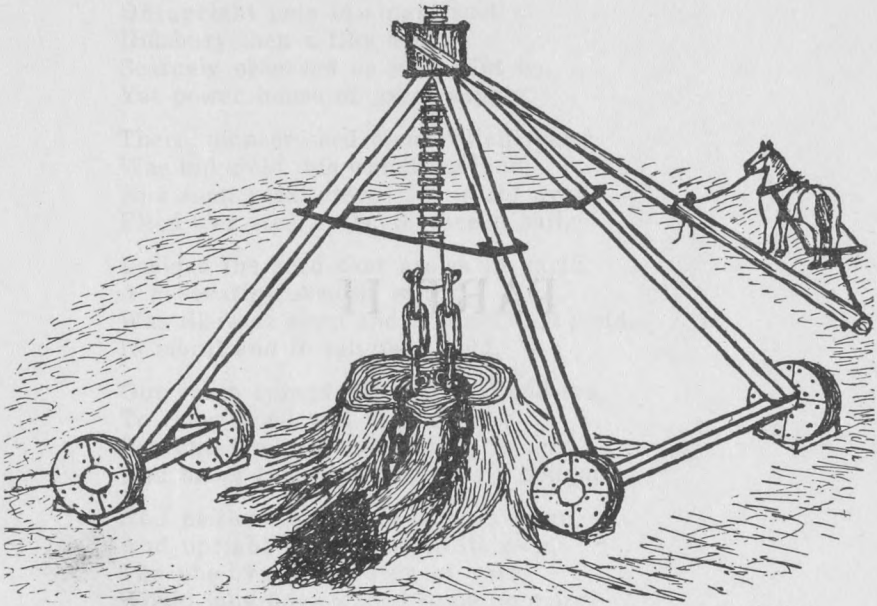
Putting on the yoke—Oxen are tricky, they will bluff you if they can.

PART II

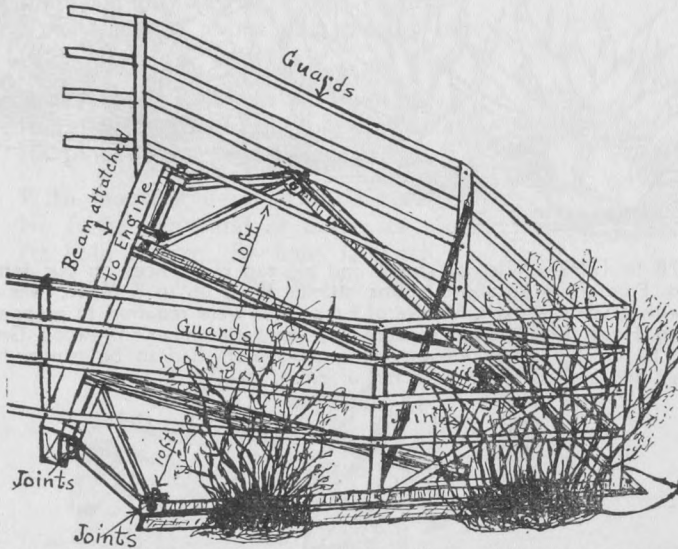


In 1878 to 1892—Miles of stump and zig-zag rail fences on our farm in Ontario. From four- to six-foot pine stumps lined up in a fence; was hard work with a yoke of oxen. Weeks of hard labor were required to prepare for cropping. Huge chips and blocks were gathered for summer's firewood. Ground had to be leveled where stumps came out. Roots had to be trimmed and gathered and burned. They were full of pitch.

SUCH WAS LIFE



Trees 200 ft. tall, clear white pine sold for \$10.00 to \$12.00 per 1000 ft. in 1870 to 1880, board measure. Stumps up to six ft. in diameter were pulled and lined in fences. Every round the horse makes raises the stump one-half an inch to up-end it.



DREADNAUGHT BRUSHCUTTER, FORERUNNER OF BULLDOZER

First in Canada. Built by M. Weber, Didsbury, Alta. Pioneering in 1910. Cut 6000 acres poplar and willow up to 8 in. dia., 30 feet tall, before and after First World War, with a 45-60 Holt Caterpillar tractor. The guards pushed falling brush in windrows. Cuts the bulk of the root clump. Breaking made 25% easier and 25% better. Scalps the crown and pushes it to the side.

Such Was Life

Homesteading in the sticks and depending on the sale of firewood, poles and rails, fish and pheasants for a living left vacancies to be filled by whatever could be laid hold of.

Vegetation would very often freeze in mid-summer. The cow or two, driven by mosquitos and bull-dog flies, would wander into the unknown, hence milk would be on a non-existing list, and butter likewise.

Hunting for the cows on foot in the bush was one way for children to get lost at times.

Hauling a load of pole wood to town to exchange it for a sack of flour, or rails and posts to get shoes and clothing meant a day to cut and load the wood and rails, a day to haul them to town and a day to return with the goods—three days to earn three dollars with the team.

Piles of wood, rails and posts were often the means of tying up the miller's and merchant's small amount of capital with which business had to be managed. At times there was little or no sale for the said commodities in town.

Household furniture and cooking utensils were of a very frontier nature. Tin pails to do the cooking in and tin cans to drink out of, wooden bench and wooden blocks to sit on, beds of hay or moss answered a good purpose, as also did spruce boughs laid in fashion of feathers on a chicken's back.

The log shack, plastered with mud between the logs, with the aid of a drum stove, defied forty below weather. Gunny sacks kept in place with binder twine kept feet from freezing and took the place of overshoes. Home-knit stocking and mitts, the products of industrious hands, gave comfort to the family.

For several years schools were non-existent, as there were not sufficient school-age children in the neighborhood. Church service, likewise was a rare event, if at anytime.

For Christmas there was a stuffed rabbit or a pheasant. Possibly a special dish that was blended by special hard-thinking cooks inspired by a keen desire to give the family the best within their power.

Out of the sticks, nevertheless, came some of our loyal and bright citizens, who when given an equal chance, in no case remained in rear of others who had better homes and earlier advantages.

Perserverance with a desire to make good still counts. Hardships give way and in many cases have been stepping stones to happiness and success.

* * *

One of our early settlers (a bachelor) went on horseback to pick saskatoons six or seven miles north. There are few trails leading to anywhere in particular and so direction was to nowhere. Having lost all sense of time and plenty of berries to pick, he lost himself among the brush and as usual started home in the wrong direction. He had a bag full of berries and so could not go faster than a walk as jolting would not improve the berries.

SUCH WAS LIFE

After a few hours' ride he landed at Dog Pound creek and by checking which way the water ran knew general directions. It was now almost dark and clouds were gathering. He rode long enough to be sure he was beyond his place. However, it was dark and to go on may be a mistake, so he decided to dream away the night as best he could. As he unsaddled the pony he thought he smelled some new-mown hay and the breeze indicated the direction from which it came. He was soon at the haystack and parked, digging himself into the stack and tying the pony to his feet.

The howling coyotes made it difficult to get a bit of sleep so at dawn he got up and explored the territory. A shack about half a mile distant encouraged him to find out where he was. He rode up to it and knocked at the door but no one answered. He opened the door very quietly so as not to arouse the occupant perchance there might be one.

It took a desperate effort to convince himself that he was in his own shack, so completely was he lost.

* * *

The fact that one hundred and sixty acres of land could be had for little money, compared to European prices, appealed to many Eastern citizens. Folks who had only a few acres or no land at all took many things for granted on the basis of the old country way of doing.

A case in point came to light in the central part of Alberta where a man, not having much equipment or experience, settled on a farm and as might be expected, was late getting his land seeded. The result was that the crop was frozen in the fall before it was ready to cut, while his neighbors had a good grade of wheat.

When hauling his wheat to market he received much less than his neighbors and demanded an explanation. The elevator agent simply told him his wheat was frozen. It was cold at that time. The farmer thinking it must have frozen while hauling, decided to play safe when he hauled the next load and so gathered blankets and gunny sacks, and what he had, and lined his wagon box and covered his load. This however, did not help the situation. The farmer had to learn the hard way and get his crop in early.

* * *

Ezra Sherrick, like other early settlers, had no money. A sod-roofed shack on a homestead was little comfort when the stomach began to talk its meal-time language. Mr. Sherrick relates the following experience:

"Having landed a much-needed job on the Scarlett ranch, three miles south of my homestead on the Rosebud creek, and not having a saddle horse, I was obliged to walk going and coming. Mr. Scarlett warned me of the danger of being on foot in case I struck the cattle on the range, as they would take after me in an unfriendly manner.

"On my first week end return home I scanned the prairie to see what my chances were of avoiding any cattle. The way seemed clear and I struck out.

"By the time I was half way home a thunder shower was in the making and a few head of cattle were showing up, peacefully grazing at a distance. Everything was fine until suddenly a thunder bolt struck

SUCH WAS LIFE

heavily and in no time cattle were running and bellowing from all directions. Before I could make a get-a-way there were about two hundred head of cattle crowding in on me. I saw the first stampede on the prairie without riders in charge.

"What could I do? Quick action was necessary. I took off my coat, waved it over my head and yelled at the top of my voice as I ran as hard as I could into fate. This strange and unexpected manoeuvring scared and dispersed the cattle, and after a run for my life I was exhausted but safe. Needless to say, after such a scare I soon had a saddle pony."

* * *

Among the early settlers was Mr. Frank who had homesteaded by proxy. Anxious to see his land he took a shovel and walked four miles west. After finding the stake which indicated his possession he dug in several places to determine the nature of the soil. He then planted the shovel in the ground and hung his black overcoat over it. He was now ready to further survey his half mile square piece of land. He did not go far when up jumped a pack rabbit; a little further on he spied a badger digging after gophers; and a little later he saw a coyote. What will I see next, he thought, maybe a bear?

The day was a bit cloudy and his sight none too good and he decided he had seen enough for that time and he was ready to hit for home. He had by this time lost all sense of direction and as usual went the wrong way. He thought of his coat and shovel, but where were they? He could not see them and hunted here and there. Maybe the wind blew them over. Just then the sun appeared and brightened his vision and in the distance saw what looked like a bear. He shouted, he jumped and swung his arms, and waved his cap but the bear did not seem to change his position; he was erect and moving his fore arms. Crowding cautiously toward the bear he finally noticed it was his overcoat, the sleeves blowing in the wind.

* * *

A homesteader in the Rimby district sold his home to an adventurous student from the Old Country, who had great ambitions to become a farmer. In the deal a yoke of oxen and a saddle pony were included; also the hauling of several hundred bushels of grain to the elevator was thrown in for good measure.

The student had no experience with oxen and as the country is quite hilly, he had no idea what it meant to go down hill with a load of grain.

He was greatly delighted with the ease the oxen took the load up hill and naturally thought going down hill would be easier still, and therefore made no effort to break the momentum of the load before it got the best of the oxen. Now, the oxen had no way of holding back the load except with the back of their horns pushing against the yoke. By the time he was half way down the hill the oxen were galloping at full speed. The danger of a mishap was realized, so the student lay flat on the load and hung on.

The next time the student saw the homesteader he gave him a piece of his infuriated mind for selling him oxen that would not hold back a

SUCH WAS LIFE

load of grain. The homesteader advised him to brake his load before going down hill. The student did not know how and was reluctant to expose his ignorance. He had heard that to stop a horse from running you hobbled it. This gave him the idea that would keep the oxen from running if he did the same with them. He bought hobbles, but fortunately a good neighbor homesteader had learned of the student's intentions and advised him of a better way, showing him how to lock a wheel. The student of the academy now became a pioneer student under his neighbor's tutorship and found he had a long way to go to become a farmer graduate.

* * *

It was fortunate for Steve Brooks that "music hath charms."

Early in the spring of 1899 Steve decided to hitchhike to Calgary from the James & Otterbein sawmill situated on the Little Red Deer river west of Didsbury, a trip of fifty-five miles with only a one per cent chance of getting a lift.

A late snowstorm left drifts high and artistic along the brush, fences and coulee bank. The open prairie, however, was clear enough for cattle to wander and they were keen to get out.

Steve took his accordion along to practise and also to pass the time on the lonesome journey. On the second day he ran into a bunch of range cattle, and if it had not been for the accordion and the snowdrift the cattle would have tracked him down. However, he saw a cave-like drift and ran into it and began to play some fast and loud music. The cattle having dispersed, he emerged from his hideout and continued his journey, playing as he went along, getting good practise as well as passing the time during the crisis.

Plenty of excitement on a loney trip, at times.

* * *

With the opening of the Peace River section of the country, a bi-weekly mixed train was nothing to write home about. Travellers had to leave at three a.m. and either carry lunch or have special breakfast ordered.

On one of these occasions, Mr. Alloway ordered chicken soup, ham and eggs. He ate the soup and while waiting for the balance of his breakfast, was shifting about a bone he found in his soup.

A traveller sitting at the same table noticed this and said, "Let me see that bone you are playing with". The request was granted—"sure enough," said the traveller, "that is the same bone I had in my soup four weeks ago, on my last trip,—here is the mark I made on it".

* * *

Before we had pasture land fenced we picketed our horses at night. The mosquitoes very often tormented them so they would run the length of the tether and the stake would finally pull out, or the snap on the halter would break.

One morning as I went to get the horses the snaps had broken, and having only recently purchased them from a ranch forty miles away, I knew they were headed that way. I followed up and everywhere I met

SUCH WAS LIFE

along the creeks where ranchers were located they said "I saw them go by some time ago."

After riding hard for several hours I saw them in the distance feeding on a plateau. When I got close enough for them to see me they took to running and a chase was staged. I finally overtook them and swung them homeward, but I had to keep them going or they would have turned on me. It was two o'clock in the afternoon when I had my breakfast, after a fifty mile ride in high gear. Where was my stomach.

* * *

Dick Oliver and his wife had to make a trip to what was supposed to be Didsbury. The nags were hitched to the wagon and a board laid across the box for a seat and off they went.

It had rained during the night (yes poured) and by the time they were returning homeward the creek had washed out the culvert and water was covering unusual places.

The wife thought they had better not venture to cross, but Dick said, "I have crossed before when it was high and we'll make it." However, the extra washout did not show at the time and when in midstream down when the horses and front wheels. The horses were unable to mount the drop of the washout while hitched to the wagon. So what? Dick thought a moment and then loosened the tugs and sent the horses scrambling towards home, while he sat beside his accusing wife, about two and a half miles from home.

Dick's plan worked; about three hours later his son came back with the horses and extra help to get the marooned couple on their way home. And so another incident helped to round of the chapter of pioneer life for Dick and his wife.

* * *

Didsbury was not without honor in the years of 1902, 1903 and 1904. The town and district organized a soccer team and played in the league with towns from Calgary to Red Deer. When the finals were played the Didsbury boys were champions of Alberta.

The team was made up of Alf Studer, Harry Seibel, Bert Rosenberger, Bert Chatham, Doug Ramsey, Chick Bricker, Norman Boehmer, Mr. Pengally and Norman Steckle.

In the league competition of who could send the ball farthest into the field in a single kick, the honor was brought to Didsbury by Norman Boehmer.

There are only two of the boys of this soccer team now residing in Didsbury. They are Alf Studer and Harry Seibel. Chick Bricker in Calgary.

The question was often asked at the time: "Where is Didsbury?" However, the boys put the town on the map—what there was of it.

* * *

Pioneer ministers preached in shacks, log school houses or any enclosure that was useable. Blocks of wood, parts of chairs or benches,

SUCH WAS LIFE

potato sacks, boxes, logs, rocks, or what have you, made "comfortable" seats for the audience.

The absence of collections, some times gave impulse to good deeds or gifts in the minister's favor. In one instance he received a calf toward his support. This calf was taken care of and in due time was marketable. The nearest dealer, however, was ten miles north and arrangements were made to deliver the heifer on a certain date. By the time the date had arrived there also had arrived a foot of soft snow in the month of April.

The minister had a saddle mare called "Nellie", which was quite gentle except when unusual objects touched her in unusual places. A feed of oats was tied to the saddle for a mid day snack. However, the sack was not double tied and soon it had drawn through the loop and then dangled as it hung on the end of the enlarged seam.

When, of course, the heifer had reached the end of its pasture range it made up its mind to go back home, and the minister and his helper had quite a number of sudden turns and twists. The dangling sack caught Nellie in the flank and she started to buck and pitched the minister head long into the foot of snow. During this episode he was heard to say, "I-Nellie-i-yi-yi". A few moments later he was clearing snow out of his whiskers. He re-tied his sack to the saddle in double style and he and his help made delivery of the heifer, none-the-worse for having added experience to his seminary education.

Many more incidents were added to the library of experience during the minister's pioneering in the district. He finished a post graduate course for which no letters were added to his name as titles, other than the thanks and good will of those whom he served.

* * *

In 1894 a small party of land seekers drove out to look over the country from six to eight miles east. There were no trails or land marks except the old Edmonton trail winding every direction to avoid sloughs and creeks. Iron stakes were driven at the four corners of each section, designating the section, township and range. Some of these were hard to find among the thick grass.

During their meandering from place to place a fire was noticed at some distance, but not knowing the action of prairie fires and the wind it creates, they paid little attention for the time being. However, a sudden change of wind brought the fire towards them—and then what? "Anybody got a match?" was the encircling question. Among the party were two somewhat pocket-worn matches. They wanted to back fire, but the first match went out. The wind blew out the second one, and the final chance was with a stub of a third. This they lit under cover and started a small piece of paper and soon had a burned patch of prairie to get inside of. The grass was heavy and the smoke and heat were intense, but they made a run across the flame under a blanket. The horses jumped under protest and the party was safe.

P.S.—Following the above incident a general warning was issued for everyone to carry matches in future.

* * *

One of our early pioneer stalwarts being informed that a friend from the East had moved into the district, decided to go and see him.

SUCH WAS LIFE

There were very few horses to be hired as there were no livery or sales stables in business at that time. Anyway, walking was good and took plenty of time. Trails were new and not well worn.

When about a third of the way out, about two and a half miles, he was attracted by a growling, bellowing, roaring noise, but could see nothing that would be responsible for such a chorus of strange noise, when suddenly coming over a mound in the trail he saw two bulls approaching.

He had heard of the danger of contacting range cattle when on foot. He scanned the area for a tree to climb or rocks to hide behind, but all he could see was a clump of small brush, and immediately he shifted into high gear and made for safety. He laid down as flat as possible.

The bulls had lost sight of him and turned off on another trail, and as soon as he thought it safe to outrun the bulls he headed for town. After some inquiry he found a saddle horse and tried again. This time he reached his destination, a full hour late for dinner. As to the size of his appetite or the volume of food consumed, we will take a guess.

* * *

Comparing the delivery of cream to town in the years of 1902 to 1906 with the present day makes interesting reading, especially to those who were victims of the circumstances and conditions at that time.

A cycle of wet years had soaked the black loam soil of the country, especially in the west and northern part of the district. Creeks and sloughs had their full quota of surplus water. Drainage was impossible for a few settlers. They had plenty of work on their own place to do, especially around the buildings. In many places on high ground saddle horses and teams sank knee deep into the mud of their own weight. Getting mired unexpectedly with a few cans of cream on a wagon was not unusual. A logging chain came in very handy when a wagon had to be pulled out of the mire in two sections. A gravel box was the safe way to haul in as the planks could be easily carried individually. Cans had to be carried and reloaded after the wagon was recoupled on higher ground.

The same difficulties would, of course, be met on the return trip. Supplies had to be taken back home and so a six to ten mile trip to town would stretch out the day at both ends and well into the night.

Never had the phrase, "Home Sweet Home" a more musical ring than when such a trip was finished, even though it only was a crude shack.

The same crucifying job had to be faced in hauling fire wood or logs and rails from the bush.

Little visiting was exchanged as homesteads were separated by C. and E. lands, plus Hudson Bay and school sections interspersed. Telephones? There were none. School houses were far apart and swarms of mosquitoes were plentiful on the way to and from school, as well as the mud.

A description of the roads is well summed up in the following:

A homesteader was asked in town how the roads were. The reply was, "They are sixty-six feet wide and about that deep."

* * *

SUCH WAS LIFE

Like many other pioneer ministers who came to the West to serve the district dotted here and there with a few members and adherents of their faith, Rev. Black settled on a homestead in the country.

Due to hills and creek crossings the best way to get about (except horseback) was with a buckboard or two-horse democrat. Trails or no trails, many isolated shacks had to be visited.

Pastor Black had very little experience with horses and harness and on one occasion when he attempted to hitch his ponies to the democrat he had the breeching so badly tangled that he could not make a proper hitch. The more he twistel to undo the tangle the worse it got.

Discouraged and belated for his trip he thought he would scan the pages of a noted dictionary for information, but even then found no way to rectify his tangled harness.

The next day a fellow minister, who knew horses and harness, came his way and in true Western hospitality solved his problem. Pastor Black expressed his gratitude and remarked, "You know, the blessed book never even mentioned the wor-rd, and I find there is so much to learn in pioneer life that is not found in the dictionary."

* * *

One of the early settlers had managed to raise one gobbler out of a brood of six. The other five were lost by straying away and picked up by coyotes or died a natural death due to wet weather.

The question arose as to what would be the best way of using the turkey. If it was eaten at Christmas there would be no money to buy clothes. It was therefore decided to sell it and buy clothes for the winter.

The family had heard of a rancher who would pay five dollars for a good tom turkey delivered six miles northwest. Our subject had a team but no wagon, so he had to borrow one from a neighbor and happily started out to deliver the turkey and collect the five dollars to buy clothes with.

Not knowing the trails and creek crossings he cut across the prairie to save time and get back in a hurry, but soon found himself up against a small creek and not a sign of a crossing. In an effort to get the horses to jump at a narrow point the sod gave way and one of the horses fell and smashed the tongue of the wagon. Having a supply of hay wire (the settler's friend) he wound the tongue and managed to deliver the turkey and get his five dollars. But what about the borrowed wagon with a broken tongue? He was six miles from a blacksmith shop, and decided to drive into town and have a new tongue put in the wagon. "What's the damage?" he asked the blacksmith. "Five bucks," was the reply.

So our friend started home after a hard day's trip, and had to face his family with no turkey, no five dollars and no clothes. He had only the privilege of substituting hopes for "better luck next time" if a next time ever came.

* * *

Billy Hayes relates this experience in the early days:

When making his first trip west he was engaged by Mr. Otterbein of James and Otterbein, who had set up a saw mill just north of Elkton on the Little Red.

SUCH WAS LIFE

Billy had never been west of the Dog Pound Creek, Mr. Otterbein, who was staying in town over the weekend, instructed him to take his team and call at Jno. Bellamy's homestead and pick up a quarter of beef enroute. By the time this was done it was dark and from there on trails meant little by way of direction, what few there were.

After plodding along for some time he saw a light and thinking that it could not be far from the trail he tied his horses to the wagon and started toward the light, with the hope of getting information as to his whereabouts. The light, after walking for about 20 minutes, seemed farther away than when he started and all of a sudden disappeared. How was he to find his team? There was no trail. After wandering about he finally reached his wagon and to his surprise found a bunch of coyotes surrounding it, sniffing, yodelling and yelling in a whining tone, trying to get his quarter of beef which was in a triple high box wagon. Not knowing anything about coyotes his spine began to creep and for a time his nerve to move at all had left him. He finally forced himself to hook up his team and resumed his journey, trusting to his horses to take him to their home.

When crossing the creek at Rugby his second episode was none too interesting, having to pry his wagon up to assist the horses to get across.

By three-thirty in the morning he arrived home and found himself in a new world eighteen miles from where he started.

* * *

When Irvin Bartz tore down the house that was built in 1894, he found a calendar hanging between the studding since 1895. The house was lined inside a year after the outside was built and the calendar was not taken down. It was one given by the Northwest Ins.

This incident when drawn to my attention, revived the following story in my memory:

An elderly pioneer insurance agent had heard of a colony of settlers coming to Didsbury. He left the town of Banff and came via the Morley trail to about four miles west of Didsbury and there side-stepped to hit a few shacks that were in sight.

He travelled with an old grey horse (his friend Shimmel). His home-made cutter was long enough to lie down in, putting his feet under the seat. He carried a grub pile so he could make his home wherever he chose to stop. He carried an axe to cut wood and ice, a pail for water or to melt snow for himself and his Shimmel. Life was complete as if he travelled in a modern trailer.

After calling at several shacks in the district he learned that almost all the men were gone to help thresh, for it took the neighborhood to make a full crew at that time. The crew was at work two and a half miles east of the track, so he decided to move himself to where his best bet seemed to offer an opportunity for business.

Having acquired a diplomatic complex he offered his services as a member of the threshing gang when he arrived. It so happened that his help was needed and at once he was set to the task of carrying grain from the machine to the bin in a two bushel sack. The path to follow

SUCH WAS LIFE

lay between a haystack and a log stable, wide enough for two persons to pass. Mr. Vance and I were very glad for the help he gave as the bins were filling fast and the contents needed to be worked back and upwards.

The agent was a good worker and was making his full quota of trips to the bins.

During the afternoon an old sow was prospecting the lay-out and finally laid down beside the haystack and went to sleep (as it appeared) near the path we walked.

Mr. Vance was full of harmless tricks and the temptation now afforded was irresistible. He covered the snow with hay and placed a post across the path leaning against the log stable. It was now the agent's turn to pass that way with his load, and by the time the crucial moment had arrived Mr. Vance had several of the crew as an audience to witness the first true-to-life picture show.

The agent stepped high on top of the hay and the scramble of agent, sow and spilling grain sack was a complete movie.

The agent was a good old sport and took it as a huge joke at his expense. However, that evening he wrote up seven or eight policies and the price of the joke reacted to his gain.

* * *

In the days when trails were short cuts from anywhere to everywhere it was difficult to keep the right direction unless you were familiar with the open country as a whole.

Two settlers from a village had heard of a friend in need twenty miles west and they decided to visit him. Upon their return home-ward in their sleigh on a clear, star-lit sky they became much confused as to the right turn of the trails. Seeing a light they pulled in and inquired. The occupant of the shack directed them and after about two hours' driving they thought the village lights should be seen. They again inquired and to their surprise met the same man at the same place they had previously inquired, still nine miles from the village.

* * *

Horse back was the common way of delivering cattle to market at the turn of the century.

Mr. Briggs delivered a bunch of steers to Calgary market for which he received ten one hundred dollar bills. Being in his shirt sleeves he put the bills in his hip pocket at the time. He started for his ranch forty miles away and as he arrived he thought of his bills, but reaching into his pocket he only found one bill. The next morning he retraced his tracks at daylight and found all the one hundred dollar bills but two. They were scattered at intervals along the trail.

* * *

Flying ants, like mosquitoes, used to have their innings in pioneer days. They were poisonous; they got into your eyes, ears and nose, and down your neck in spite of any netting you may have worn to keep them out. Their bite was itchy, burning, raw and swelling.

While riding across country after a warm rain I got the full benefit of their venegeance—what could I do? There was no professor or

SUCH WAS LIFE

anyone else of a learned type to solve the desperate problem. It was more than a sixty-four-dollar question.

While taking the punishment I noticed a caravan of Indians coming around the bend of a trail on the hillside. They were whooping up a ki-yi-yi yeepee-i in jolly style—chiefs, squaws and kiddies were having a gay time. About two feet over their heads they held branches of brush and as they drew near I saw swarms of flying ants whirling around the branches.

It did not take me long to learn my lesson, and I felt a warm thank you to the unlearned brother Indian.

The flying ants went to the highest point, brush overhead saved the day.

* * *

In the summer of 1894 it was very dry. The surface wells, dug in the settlement did not furnish enough water. Our well was 46 ft deep and had to be deepened by hand drilling and blasting, farther into the rock. With the help of our neighbor, we drilled two feet and blasted with fair success. However, the smoke from dynamite and powder would rise out of the well due to heavy air of that day. After waiting several hours we decided to go down and work. When looking upward, there was only a faint light to be seen. In a few minutes our helper complained of congested breathing (as he had come down first). We gave the signal to let down the rope and by the time he had been hoisted, I was in no better condition. As the rope came down the second time, I put a half-hitch around my body and placed my foot in the loop. I gave the signal and from then did not know how I got out.

That more fatalities did not occur is bordering on the miraculous. Drownings, in the fast rolling waters, being lost in blizzards, prairie fires and mishaps of many kinds, due to risk in trial and error undertakings away, at times, from everybody.

Strange to say, real pioneers have no regret for a life of hardship and sacrifice. I have never met such. A compensation all its own accompanies a life of fortitude and faith. Our junior generation, streamlined and push-buttoned, has a background that did not come by chance.

* * *

During the fall of 1896, while camping near the Little Red Deer River, Mr. Wm. Hunsperger got a strange surprise as he looked out of his tent one morning.

A bear, sitting on his haunches, only a short distance away, was sizing up the situation of his new discovery. No doubt he sniffed the breezes of breakfast cooking. Mr. Hunsperger had no gun, so he thought it wise not to interfere with "Bruin". Likewise, the bear thought it best to leave good enough alone, and slowly wandered to more bushy regions. Mr. Hunsperger, however, did not wander far from his tent where he kept a slow fire burning most of the day to mystify his uncertain visiting friend. The lone bear no doubt had wandered beyond the foothill range out of curiosity and exploration reasons.

* * *

OUR FRIENDS THE PRAIRIES

Countless decades formed wondrous soil,
A rich black loam where men may toil,
With sweat of brow they turn the sod,
And sow the seed and trust in God.

The shifting herds on hillside graze,
Increasing numbers there they raise,
Rich prairie wool and sunshine clear,
Grow tons of luscious steak each year.

In grain and livestock we excel,
The honors of red ribbons tell,
There're mines of great potential wealth,
Besides a luring clime of health.

Throughout the land great beds of coal,
From tippled shaft o'er road beds roll,
To warm the homes when snow flakes fly,
E'en forty below we will defy.

From chimney flue bulge clouds of smoke,
Where strong-armed men their boilers stoke,
And wheels of industry are turned,
And many a livelihood is earned.

Deep from the earth crude oil and gas,
Through pipeline to refinery pass,
Here products scrubbed are made to yield,
And serve in other useful field.

When o'er the spacious prairie wide,
In God's own garden we did ride,
The willow bluffs and poplar groves,
Were restful spots; were real alcoves.

Along the winding trail and mound,
Wild roses pink, they did abound,
Amid the green and curly grass,
They grew and bloomed in clustered mass.

Their fragrance floating in the air,
Mixed with purest sunshine rare,
That was a treat we did enjoy,
A friendship all in God's employ.

The speckled plain, a pleasant view,
With many flowers of different hue,
Each in their turn their quota add,
To make the lonely pioneer glad.

The meadow lark and whistling snipe,
And many friends of feathered type,
Break silence oft with cheering song,
From early morning, all day long.

At times when riding o'er the range,
Distant objects seem so strange,
—"Mirage", in its illusive way,
Brings objects close, though far away.

When friendly chinook breezes blow,
O'er prairie wire, the snow must go.
Severest cold no longer dwells,
We bask for weeks in warmer spells.



Harvesting in 1830-1880 with cradle. Kitchener, Ont.
Raking and binding by hand.

OUR FRIENDS THE ROCKIES

High over all - majestic scenes,
The Rocky Peaks pose for the screens,
Their snowy heads - God's own design,
Defy man's art and poet's line.

Untold ages came and went,
Through time and storm they never bent,
Their sturdy backs - firm do stand,
Those mighty bulwarks of our land.

A symbol of endurance rare,
Throughout the years of wear and tear,
And yet so gen'rous to mankind,
Its equal where else could you find?

Inspiring wonders to behold,
And mines of wealth ours to unfold,
Their giant timbers millions strong,
Have served the nation century long.

Their concrete substance from the rocks
Form great bulkheads; builds roads and blocks,
While emerald-tinted streams abound,
Through rolling hills they wind around.

Here whirling turbines generate power,
And send the current over tower,
To towns and country far afield,
There heat and light and power yield.

The bulkheads, too, great storage make,
By banking river into lake,
And change the prairie desert plain,
To growing fruit and golden grain.

Their teeming forests; a minor zoo,
In sparkling waters trout wind through,
For years the Indian's paradise,
But now paleface, they too, entice.

The setting sun on evening duty,
Trims mountain's edge with golden beauty,
The mottled sky of pink and blue,
Adds splendor to the changing view.

When shades of night the scenes take o'er,
And twilight fades - day is no more,
We're grateful for the day that's been,
And hail new glowing sunshine in.

